A PSYCHOSOCIAL STUDY OF THE FORMATION OF THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE IN WOMEN

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study offers a conception of the formation of the early adult life structure in women, based on a theory of adult development recently proposed by Daniel J. Levinson and associates. A review of the literature indicated a paucity of empirically-grounded theory concerning psychosocial development after adolescence in both sexes, and stressed the particular importance of studying women in view of the fact that traditional sex roles are being questioned as to their adequacy in providing fulfillment throughout the life course.

The general method chosen to derive theoretical concepts pertaining to women's development was the Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss, a procedure which combines simultaneous data collection and analysis, and systematically controlled sampling. The data were collected by means of the Intensive Interview, which allowed for maximum flexibility in order to attend to the nuances of individual subjects.

The data analysis proceeded through six stages of theory construction which involved continually testing the applicability of Levinson's premise that a period of developmental change occurs around age 30 which culminates in the integration and stablization of the early adult life structure. Additional subjects were selected with the goal of maximizing differences with previous subjects, in order to determine

whether common developmental changes emerged at around this age. Additional aspects of Levinson's theory, such as forming a Dream, forming a relationship with a Mentor, and forming a relationship with a Special Man, were gradually integrated into the emerging theory until a relatively coherent picture of the period from age 18 through the mid-thirties emerged.

The findings support Levinson's premise that, for women as well as for men, the formation of the early adult life structure evolves through four age-related, adult developmental periods. Women show greater variability than men in the accomplishment of certain developmental tasks, and this variability appears to be related to whether a woman forms a stable marriage and family life in her twenties, or remains single and/or pursues a career during this decade.

Women vary according to the extent to which they form an individualistic or a relational Dream; the extent to which they seek a Mentor relationship and/or a relationship with a Special Man during their twenties; and in the extent to which they attempt to form a more integrated and stable life structure around age 30, or form a second life structure following the integration of a female identity in their twenties.

The findings suggest that women's development parallels men's in the late teens and early twenties, may diverge considerably during the twenties, and by age 30, when both sexes have the opportunity to reassess their life structures, women must come to terms with the issues of marriage and parenting in both a quantitatively and qualitatively different way than is the case for men.

The conclusion is reached that the formation of a satisfactory early life structure is a more complex and difficult task for women in this society than it is for men. This is attributed to the fact that traditionally female goals are not valued in the culture, while, at the same time, women are severely sanctioned for not succeeding at them. Questions are raised about the need to replicate this study in societies with standards of sex-role behavior at variance with our own, and also of repeating the study at a later point in time in view of our own rapidly changing standards.

Finally, the usefulness of a theory of adult development is discussed in relation to treating women in psychotherapy, and also in terms of developing social programs to insure that society maximally benefits from the contributions of women.

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PART ONE

BACKGROUND AND DESIGN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the process by which women in this society assume stable adult identities. Although social scientists have a great deal to say about childhood and know a little about old age, the intervening part of the life span has been largely neglected. Generally, it has been assumed that developmental changes after adolescence are minimal in comparison with the well-documented physiological and psychosocial changes of the pre-adult years, and, if they occur at all, are thought to be primarily idiosyncratic (Clausen, 1972).

There is a considerable body of literature, primarily empirical studies regarding personality changes in early and middle adulthood, which have been comprehensively reviewed by Neugarten and Dowty (1972). More recently, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga, and associates (1975) compared 216 men and women facing four common transitions of adult life: leaving home, starting a family, having an "empty nest," and retiring. The authors concluded that differences in adaptation between the sexes were far more significant than differences between older and younger members of either sex. What is largely lacking, however, is an integrated body of developmental theory to provide a framework within which this empirical data can be investigated. Neugarten (1964) notes, in explanation of this dearth of theoretical material, the difficulties inherent in sampling (the relative unavailability of large groups of subjects in the older age groups) and methodology (the fact that longer time intervals must be used as units of investigation and, therefore, the likelihood that other characteristics will confound the age variable).

Theoretical Perspectives on Adult Development

While a number of contemporary personality theorists (Fromm, 1941; Maslow, 1954; Murray, 1936; Rogers, 1947; Sullivan, 1953) have contributed important concepts to the study of adult psychosocial development, other theorists have specifically investigated the possibility that there may be systematic developmental changes in adult life.

Jung (1933) was the first of the psychoanalysts to take an interest in personality development beyond childhood and adolescence. Jung viewed adult development as an evolving process of individuation beginning at a point of undifferentiated wholeness and moving progressively towards the realization of the self (Hall and Lindzey, 1957). The process of individuation Jung viewed as climaxing in the late thirties, at which point one begins to relinquish an externally-oriented view of life based on passion and achievement and turns to internal resources in the service of becoming more "whole." An important psychic correlate is that previously repressed archetypes from the unconscious emerge during this period as potentially creative forces in the adult personality. Jung, however, cautions that this process is not without hazards, and in his autobiography attests to his personal struggle during his late thirties and early forties before emerging through this stage of individuation (Jung, 1963).

Following Jung, various theorists have attempted to describe systematic changes in adult life by identifying a unifying psychological process, such as individuation, and tracing its vicissitudes through the stages of the life cycle with the critical shift occurring at mid-life. For example, Neugarten (1964) describes the move towards greater "interiority" around age 40; Jaques (1965) hypothesizes for artists a change from "precipitate creativity" to a more mature "sculpted creativity" at about the same age; and Buhler and Massarik (1968) view the period around 40 as involving the waning of the expansion phase of life ("Vitalitaet") and the ascension of the goal-setting phase ("Mentalitaet"). In addition, Frenkel-Brunswik (1968) and Gould (1972) have proposed that individuals pass through distinct stages during adulthood in which systematic changes in experience and/or behavior may occur.

The most comprehensive and widely accepted developmental theory of personality to date which encompasses the total life cycle has been proposed by Erikson (1959). Taking as his starting point Freud's five psychosexual stages of child development (Freud, 1905), Erikson has formulated a series of eight age-related psychosocial ego stages: the first five stages unfolding in childhood and adolescence, and the three final stages, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, and Integrity vs. Despair, occurring during early, middle, and late adulthood, respectively.

Each stage in Erikson's schema has its origin both in the individual's natural potential towards maturation and in the nature of the social structure:

> Personality can be said to develop according to steps predetermined in the human organism's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with a widening social radius, beginning with the dim image of the mother and ending with mankind, or at any rate that segment of mankind which "counts" in the particular individual's life. (Erikson, 1959, p.52)

Each phase of the life cycle is characterized by a phase-specific developmental task which is presented as a duality between the task's positive outcome and its negative outcome. For example, in the three stages of adulthood, Intimacy, the capacity to form mutual love relationships, is pitted against Isolation, the repudiation of such relationships; Generativity, the interest and capacity in establishing and guiding the next generation or to parent in the broadest sense of the term, finds its antithesis in Stagnation; and Integrity, the acceptance of oneself and one's life cycle, is presented with its correlate, Despair (p.95-98).

Levinson's Psychosocial Theory of Adult Development: The Evolution of the Individual Life Structure

Beginning with Erikson's notion that personality development can best be understood as a psychosocial process, Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1974) have recently proposed a theory of the adult life course. Using a primary sample of 40 men between the ages of 35 and 45 drawn from four occupational categories and an extensive secondary sample from novels, plays, autobiographies and the like, the authors hypothesize a series of relatively universal, genotypic, age-linked adult developmental periods.

Levinson's critical theoretical contribution is the concept of

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the _individual life structure:_

> We conceive of adult psychosocial development as the evolution of the individual life structure . . . . The life structure refers to the overall pattern or character of the individual's life at a given time. (Levinson et al., Note 1)

The life structure incorporates both internal and external aspects and is normally neither static nor constantly in flux:

> The individual maintains a given life structure for a period of time (ordinarily of the order of three to eight years), then goes through a transition leading to a new structure . . . . The period comes to an end when its tasks lose their primacy, when its life structure has served its purpose and has outlived its value, and when new tasks emerge to initiate a new period. The existence and the orderly progression of periods stem from the progressive change in tasks. (Levinson et al., Note 1)

The evolution of the life structure is thus characterized by alternating periods of stability and transition. The transition involves both the termination of the departing period and the initiation of a new period of development, and may take as long as four to five years, forming, in itself, a distinct developmental period.

Levinson draws heavily on Erikson's concepts of _developmental crisis_ and _developmental task_ in his own formulation. However, Levinson chooses the term _developmental transition_ in referring to periods of marked developmental change, reserving the term _developmental crisis_ to describe a transition which involves marked disruption or discontinuity in the life structure. In addition, Levinson believes that Erikson's ego stages focus primarily within the self, while, in conceptualizing his developmental tasks, he hopes to provide a broader conceptual basis from which to analyse the individual _process of living_ (Levinson et al., Note 1).

Another important aspect of Levinson's theory is his elaboration of certain elements of the life structure and their vicissitudes throughout the various stages of the life course. Of primary importance is the Dream:

> The core of the Dream is a sense of self-in-the-world; it has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that creates a state of excitement, aliveness, energy, anticipation. The Dream in its basic form is rather vague and unarticulated. Developmentally, the crucial question for the young man is whether and how to put his Dream into his life. (Levinson et al., Note 1)

The Dream arises as a transitional phenomenon during the early twenties (much like Winnicott's transitional object at a much earlier period of development [Winnicott, 1965]), which indicates that the young person is beginning to conceive of the possibility of being an adult within the adult world.

The development of the Dream is facilitated by forming relationships with the Mentor and the Special Woman:

> The Mentor may foster the young man's development by believing in him, by sharing the Dream, by helping to create a space within which a newly emerging self can take shape and be given a place in the world . . . . A major function of the Mentor is to be a transitional figure: to be something between parent and peer, and to foster the young person's growth from child in relation to parental adults to adult as peer with other adults. (Levinson et al., Note 1)

> The Special Woman can in diverse ways facilitate or hinder the young man's entry into a world within which the Dream can be pursued . . . . She helps carry the Dream by sharing in it, by believing in him as its hero. . . . She may also represent some part of himself other than the Dream or be antagonistic to it. (Levinson et al., Note 1)

A major distinction between Levinson and the previous theorists discussed is his emphasis on the age-linkages of his developmental periods. While the theories of Jung and Erikson, for example, are clearly age-related due to the fact that common role-transitions such as marriage, childbearing and retirement tend to occur at similar ages for most people in a given society, Levinson is the first to propose a comprehensive developmental theory of adulthood which stresses the age-linkages regardless of specific developmental milestones. This means that childbearing, for example, will have a different meaning for the individual who becomes a parent at 20, 30, 40, or 50, and that Levinson is specifically interested in the variation created by the difference in age. For many, Levinson's emphasis upon age-linkages will remain the most controversial aspect of his theory, particularly as he believes that the stages are applicable cross-culturally.

Turning specifically to Levinson's developmental periods, the authors posit the following stages in the life course of men between roughly ages 18 and 45:

Transition Into Early Adulthood (TIEA): age 18 - 22

This is a transitional period in which the primary developmental tasks are separating from the family of origin, beginning to form a Dream, setting an occupational direction, beginning to define oneself as an adult within the adult world, beginning to change the dependence/independence balance by forming relationships with adults as adults.

Getting into the Adult World (GIAW): age 22 - 28

The task of this period is to fashion an initial life structure which can provide a viable link between the valued self and the wider adult world. This involves (a) forming a new home base, (b) forming a balance between exploration and commitment, particularly with regard to work and relationships with women, (c) finding ways of living out the Dream and other important parts of the self, (d) forming a relationship with a Mentor, (e) forming a relationship with a Special Woman.

Age Thirty Transition (ATT): age 28 - 32

This period is described as a transitional stage between the explora-

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tory and provisional choices of the twenties and the demands for greater stability and integration of the life structure in the thirties:

> ATT is an opportunity to work on the flaws and limitations in the late-GIAW life structure and to create the basis for a new, more satisfactory structure with which to start Settling Down. One has a period of some four to five years in which to question and re-appraise the GIAW life structure and to ask: What have I done with my life? What do I want to make of it? What new directions shall I choose? (Levinson et al., Note 1)

Settling Down (SD) of which the last phase is Becoming One's Own Man (BOOM): age 32 - 39

The underlying tasks of this period are to settle for a few key choices, to create a broader structure around them, to invest oneself as fully as possible in the various components of this structure and to pursue long-range plans and goals within it. This involves (a) establishing one's niche in society, and (b) working at "making it."

Mid-Life Transition (MLT): age 39 - 43

The task of this transitional period is to come to terms with the disparity between one's life goals and the realization of them during the young adult years. The ultimate aim of MLT is to modify the SD life structure and to create the basis for a new structure appropriate to middle-adulthood.

Applying Levinson's Theory to the Early Adult Development of Women

Levinson explains that the decision to restrict his investigation to men was based on the desire to do an intensive study of each participant, and the belief that there were enough significant differences between men and women that their comparison would have become the primary focus of the study. While he believes that the theory, in general, is applicable to women as well as to men, Levinson stresses the need for further research along the lines of his own approach to validate his findings for women:

> We assume that our over-all framework and central concepts do have general relevance but that the character of the actual life course will differ slightly as a function of gender, class, culture and the like. Many of our specific findings for men may well not hold for women. This is a question for empirical study. The approach developed here provides a basis for this study, which we consider an essential next step.
>
> (Levinson et al., Note 1)

Thus, the aim of the present study was to contribute to a theory which had, thus far, been based solely on an investigation of the process of adult development in men.

Focusing on the Age Thirty Transition

Levinson states that the shift from the end of the Age Thirty Transition to the start of the next developmental period, Settling Down, is one of the crucial steps in adult development. Earlier periods were ruled out as focal points for the present study because other theorists, particularly Erikson, have dealt more in depth with the developmental issues involved. Levinson's contribution seems most significant in addressing the developmental issues of the twenties, thirties, and forties. An investigation of latter periods was ruled out for two major reasons: 1) the increased time involved in the in-depth retrospective interviewing of older women, and 2) the fact that I, as the investigator, am in my late twenties and questioned my capacity to empathize sufficiently with the issues of mid-life.

In selecting the period around age 30 as the focus for this study, the dissertation, in fact, addresses the entire period between ages 18 through the early thirties or, in Levinson's terms, the period of formation and stabilization of the early adult life structure. In this formulation, the Age Thirty Transition is the culmination of the developmental work necessary to becoming a full-fledged adult within the adult community and is thus integrally related to and influenced by the work of earlier periods of development.

Theoretical Perspectives on Women's Development

Most students of human psychological development agree that there are consistent, observable differences in behavior between males and females. The source of the controversy has been, more specifically, in defining the differences and in determinging whether they are biologically or environmentally determined, and whether they point to the superiority of one sex over another.

As Bardwick (1971) suggests, psychoanalytic theorists, beginning with Freud, have exerted the single greatest influence on current western thinking concerning personality development in men and women. Freud (1933), while admitting that the development of women to some extent remained a mystery to him, strongly promoted the view that personality differences between the sexes were biologically based and implied the inherent inferiority of women. The difference in the development of the two sexes, Freud believed, becomes manifest around age four. At this point in development, the little boy resolves his fear of castration through his awareness that he will someday grow up to be like his father (i.e., able to have a woman of his own like mother). In contrast, the little girl deduces from her lack of male genitals that she has already been castrated. Subsequently, she rejects her primary relationship with her mother, who she discovers does not possess a penis either, and turns to her father in hopes of gaining back what she has lost. Thus, while the boy, through identification with his father, continues to develop psychologically, the girl must wait until marriage and ultimately childbirth, at which point she symbolically may regain the missing penis, before further development is possible.

Freud again becomes pessimistic about the potential of further psychological growth for women following childbirth, which in Victorian society typically occurred during the teens and early twenties.

> A man of about thirty seems a youthful, and in a sense, an incompletely developed individual, of whom we expect that he will be able to make good use of the possibilities of development which analysis lays open to him. But a woman of about the same age frequently staggers us by her psychological rigidity and unchangeability . . . . There are no paths open to her future development, it is as though the whole process had been gone through and remained unaccessible to influence for the future; as though, in fact, the difficult development which leads to femininity had exhausted all the possibilities of the individual . . . even when we are successful in removing the sufferings by solving her neurotic conflict. (Freud, 1933 p.134)

Since Freud, some psychoanalytically-oriented thinkers have attempted to modify his premise that woman's development evolves as an attempt to cope with her feelings of loss due to not having male genitals. Deutsch (1945) emphasized the positive factors implicit in having female genitalia, while other writers have stressed the influence of cultural values on observed clinical findings (de Beauvoir, 1949; Horney, 1926; Thompson, 1942). For example, Thompson argued that women actually envy men for their culturally-derived power in society. Envy of cultural status then becomes symbolized by the only observable differences between the sexes, resulting in "penis envy."

Mead (1949), like Deutsch, agreed to the overwhelming influence of biology in subsequent feminine psychological development. Based on her thorough examination of men and women in primitive societies, she concluded that girls become women through identification with their mothers' abilities to bear and nurse children, while boys must define themselves to become men:

> This gives a natural basis for the little girl's emphasis on being rather than on doing. The little boy learns that he must act like a boy, do things, prove that he is a boy, and prove it over and over again, while the little girl learns that she is a girl, and all she has to do is to refrain from acting like a boy. (p.135)

More recently, Mead, like Freud, has been criticized for her overemphasis on the influence of biological factors in subsequent personality development. While presenting similar findings to Mead: women are more relational and have more flexible ego boundaries; men are more individualistic and differentiated, Chodorow (1974) stresses that these basic differences have their origins in the differential treatment received by boy and girl infants from their mothers, rather than primarily in biological endowment:

> Mothers and women tend to identify more with daughters and to help them differentiate less, and . . . the processes of separation and individuation are made more difficult for girls. (p.48)

Another attempt to develop a positive concept of women's psychological development has been made by Erikson (1968). In his thoughtful observations of boys and girls in unstructured play situations, Erikson concluded that the difference in the spatial configurations in the play of children of the two sexes was reflective, not merely of their experiences of their genitals as Freud had suggested, but of their distinct experiences of the "ground plan" of their bodies. For girls, Erikson proposed that the presence of a creative "inner space" was the primary criterion of sexual differentiation (p.273-274).

Unfortunately, Erikson does not deal sufficiently with the implications of this compelling concept in elaborating his stages of ego development. For example, in his discussion of Initiative vs. Guilt, the stage which is the psychosocial correlate of Freud's phallic stage, Erikson sounds almost indistinguishable from his predecessor:

> Girls often undergo a sobering change at this stage, because they observe sooner or later . . . they lack one item, the penis . . . . While the boy has his visible organ to which he can attach dreams of adult bigness, the girl's clitoris only poorly sustains dreams of sexual equality.
> (Erikson, 1968, p.117)

Furthermore, Erikson's observations of the development of an adult identity in women are minimal, and can be summarized as follows:

> I think that much of a young woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selective nature of her search for the man (or men) by whom she wishes to be sought. . . . Womanhood arrives when attractiveness and experience have succeeded in selecting what is to be admitted to the welcome of the inner space "for keeps."
> (Erikson, 1968, p.283)

Bardwick (1971) has thoroughly summarized the theoretical and empirical data concerning the psychology of women. Based on both her research and clinical experience, she suggests that the twenties are a time when women achieve a "feminine identity" through their major commitment to marriage and childrearing, while the achievement of a more individualistic sense of identity may wait until the thirties or beyond.

Focus of the Present Study

While observations of adult women, such as those reviewed by Erikson and Bardwick, are important, there remains the lack of an integrated developmental theory of adult development in women to provide a context within which to examine this type of data. A review of the literature clearly indicates a paucity of research dealing with the process of development after adolescence in either sex. Theoretical perspectives on women's development as well as men's are primarily derived from theories of child development. The situation in regard to women is particularly confusing. Given the potpourri of contradictory evidence and interpretation, Bardwick's conclusion that "ideas about the psychology of women have reflected political sentiments as much as scientific investigation" (Bardwick, 1971, p.5) seems most apt.

The process by which women come to assume stable adult identities is of particular interest at a time when traditional adult female roles are being questioned as to their adequacy in providing fulfillment throughout the adult life course. The goal of the present study is to explore the applicability of an existing theory of adult male development to the life course of women. In doing so, one inevitably takes on the challenge of describing differences between men and women without bringing to bear a phallocentric bias.

In examining the early adult life course of women, this study specifically addresses itself to the period around age 30. The major research questions are as follows: Do women go through a transitional

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period of development around age 30? If so, what is the nature of the period, and what are the developmental tasks involved? How is the negotiation of these tasks related to the quality of earlier developmental periods? In what ways are women's solutions similar to and/or different from those of the men in Levinson's sample? What can these similarities and differences tell us about the nature of psychosocial differences between men and women in our society? Also, what applicability do Levinson's concepts such as the Dream, the Mentor, and the Special Man (to coin the correlate of the Special Woman) have in the early adult development of women?

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF METHOD

The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis

The purpose of this study was to generate theoretical concepts pertaining to the early adult development of women in light of an existing theory of adult male development. Since the goal was not to prove or disprove pre-existing hypotheses on this subject, as would have been impossible at this stage of research in the field, an experimental research design was judged not to be applicable. Rather, a method of data collection and analysis was required which would promote the generation of theoretical concepts in a relatively unknown field in a systematic way. The method chosen was the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This method involves the continual generation of new theoretical categories and their properties by carefully choosing comparison groups and eliciting important concepts which could later be integrated into a unified theory. As opposed to an experimental design in which data are collected prior to their analysis, in this method data are collected simultaneously as they are being analysed. Thus, data collection can be continually controlled as new theoretical categories gradually emerge. Glaser and Strauss refer to this method of data collection as "theoretical sampling" and explain:

> The basic criterion governing the selection of comparison groups for discovering theory is their theoretical relevance for furthering the development of emerging categories (p.49) . . . . The analyst can continually adjust his control of data collection to ensure the data's relevance to the impersonal

criteria of his emerging theory. (p.48)

Glaser and Strauss developed this method during their extensive study of the interaction of nurses and dying patients (1964). As they began to compare nurses' responses to the potential deaths of their patients, they noted that the category of the patient's perceived "social loss" was useful in differentiating nurses' responses. The authors then went on to examine the various criteria used by nurses to determine social loss. Based on their delineation of such properties as age and education, the authors began to specifically choose settings to interview nurses in which patients would differ according to these properties, such as a premature nursery vs. an old age home. How this method was applied to the present study will be outlined in detail in Part II.

Method of Data Collection: The Intensive Interview

For this study, a method of collecting data was required which would facilitate a woman in reporting detailed autobiographical material. Given the time limitations imposed on the research, it was not possible to study an individual's life course longitudinally. Rather, the interview process was designed to be retrospective: focusing on the process of change over time. While certain areas of investigation were identified prior to data collection based on Levinson's research, it was critical that each subject be encouraged to talk spontaneously about issues which might not have been identified as important prior to interviewing her. For this reason, the use of an extensive questionnaire or rigorous interview schedule was ruled out. Instead, the "intensive interview" used by Levinson

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was also selected for this study. This method of collecting data was originally described by Maslow (1939):

> Questioning or conversation was started only after satisfactory rapport had been established. This meant mostly a frank, trusting, friendly relationship, resembling somewhat the transference of the psychoanalysts. The investigator subordinated objectivity and standardized procedure to the necessities of the separate situations presented by each individual subject . . . . He conceived his first task to be the understanding of the person before him as an individual and only then to attempt to follow through the specific demands of the research. The technique then, is something of a fusion of the experimental and clinical approaches . . . . The questions were no more than a list of clues for conversation. No set questions were asked, but the procedure followed was the one that gave promise of best success with the individual being talked with at the time. (pp.5-6)

Based on a set of "Guidelines for Interviewing" prepared by Levinson for his research, an equivalent were designed for this study (See Appendix A). The guidelines were initially prepared for two interviews of one to two hours duration. The guidelines were intended to be used provisionally, and were modified as deemed appropriate according to the demands of each individual subject. A detailed account of modifications in the interview procedure as applied to individual subjects will be discussed in Part II. All interviews were tape-recorded and a detailed transcript was made following each interview. Wherever possible, the interviews were held in the subject's home in order to gain as full an impression as possible of her current life situation.

There are obvious, inherent limitations to this method of data collection. For one thing, the data are not exactly comparable for all subjects since no standard set of questions were asked. In the second place, the investigator must rely on the subject's willingness to reveal material about her life; therefore, both conscious and unconscious resistance must be accepted as inevitable. In addition, controlled unconscious material, as might be elicited through projective techniques, was absent from the data.

Factors in Initial Subject Choice

Based on the guidelines outlined by Glaser and Strauss, subjects for this study were chosen on the basis of those who would contribute the most information to the emerging theory concerning the nature of the period around age 30 for women. In Levinson's study, men were chosen from four occupational groups. For women, it seemed intuitively obvious that occupation would not be, in itself, the major defining factor of the adult life structure. Rather, it was decided that a combination of familial and occupational roles would most accurately describe the distinct life structures of contemporary American women. Selected as typical familial roles were: (1) never having been married (single), (2) married, and (3) married with children. Typical occupational roles selected were: (1) housewife; (2) employed outside the home in a typically feminine profession, such as teaching or nursing; and (3) employed outside the home in a typically masculine profession, such as medicine or engineering.

The next step was the creation of a provisional framework which outlined eight possible combinations of familial and occupational roles (See Figure 1). It was believed that subjects initially selected on the basis of these criteria would differ significantly in terms of the quality of their life structures. Thus, underlying common features of a period of developmental change around age 30, if it existed, would be highlighted by this method. It should be stressed that this framework

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FAMILIAL STATUS → OCCUPATIONAL STATUS ↓	Single	Married	Married Mother
Housewife	✗	(1)	(2)
Employed: Typically Female Occupation	(3)	(4)	(5)
Employed: Typically Male Occupation	(6)	(7)	(8)

Figure 1. Provisional Framework for Selecting Subjects

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was provisional; that is, it was devised to be used in selecting the first two subjects only. After that, it was expected, in accordance with the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis, that additional subjects would be selected on the basis of criteria which would emerge from the data analysis itself.

To begin the process of data collection, two subjects were selected between the ages of 31 and 36. This age range was chosen because, according to Levinson's theory, women would be most likely to be concluding or have recently concluded developmental work on the Age Thirty Transition and be more or less firmly rooted in a stable adult life structure, while, at the same time, be most in touch with the entire transitional period. As will be discussed in Part II, this initial assumption was altered in the course of collecting data, and the age range of the final sample included women between the ages of 31 and 40. It was felt initially, however, that selecting subjects in their early thirties would allow for a minimum of retrospective reconstruction while permitting examination of the entire period around age 30.

Since the success of the intensive interview is dependent upon the rapport established between interviewer and interviewee, it was critical to select subjects who would feel comfortable discussing personal aspects of their lives. With this issue in mind, personal acquaintances were approached for names of women in the specified age range who they felt might be interested in participating in the study. The idea was that "friends of friends" would feel more comfortable sharing details of their lives than would either personal friends or complete strangers.

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After a potential subject's name was obtained, she was either called directly, or else an introductory phone call was made, depending upon the preference of my acquaintance. The potential subject was asked whether she would be willing to participate in a doctoral dissertation in clinical psychology concerning the ways in which women become adults and how they come to be living the kinds of lives they are. If the woman seemed interested, she was then sent an explanatory letter which reiterated the contents of the phone call and discussed additional issues such as confidentiality and tape-recording the interviews (See Appendix B). If she still agreed to be interviewed, an initial appointment was set up with her. This procedure was elaborated slightly after the selection of the initial two subjects, at which point additional criteria became important in choosing further subjects, such as how long a woman had been married, or whether or not she had made a sustained commitment to a career. Where such modifications were made regarding specific subjects, these will be detailed in Part II.

Following the final interview with each subject, arrangements were made to provide feedback according to the wishes of the individual subject. As it seemed arbitrary which of the eight possible combination of familial and occupational roles outlined in Figure 1 should be interviewed first, the initial two subjects were chosen on the basis of their availability.

Factors in Additional Subject Choice

The analysis of each additional subject raised questions concerning the extent to which reported aspects of her life structure implied the existence of a developmental period of change around age 30 and suggested additional criteria for the next subject to be interviewed. By this method of systematically controlling similarities and differences among subjects, it became possible to determine both: (1) what were the underlying common features of the period around age 30 that characterized the entire sample; and (2) where there were differences between subjects, what variables accounted for the differences. Ultimately, it could then be determined how this sample of women compared with Levinson's sample of men, and variables hypothesized to account for the differences.

The method outlined above for obtaining subjects proved basically successful throughout the course of the study. Of a total of 15 women contacted in the search for the 11 who comprised the final sample, only three women declined to participate. One woman refused on the grounds that she had been previously upset by the lack of confidentiality during her participation in a previous psychology research project. Two women declined on the grounds that they could not make the time commitment required, and one was rejected when it was discovered in the course of the initial phone contact that she did not meet the criteria for additional subjects at that time. Given the nature of the method of data collection being used, several issues that were unanticipated in beginning the interviewing became problematic during the course of the study. These will be discussed in detail as they apply to individual subjects in Part II.

Following the completion of the data collection, written permission was obtained from 10 of the 11 subjects, allowing for them to be quoted in the write-up of the study, and repeating in detail that their names and any other identifying information, such as their place of residence or occupation, would be disguised or deleted in any written or verbal communications involving them. In the case of the one subject who could not be contacted for written permission, direct quotations have been omitted in the write-up of her material (See Appendix C).

Characteristics of the Final Sample

Table 1 presents the identifying characteristics of the final sample. Upon interviewing, each subject was assigned a number and a pseudonym comprising a first name and last initial which were, from that point on, used to identify the subject in all written and verbal discussions concerning her (Columns #1 and #2). Column #3 presents the year of birth of each subject. Although the age range of the subjects at the time of the interviews spanned almost a decade (Column #4), all subjects were actually born between the years 1936 and 1942. The discrepancy is due to the fact that the interviewing process itself took almost two years. This information becomes important in examining the influence of various social trends, particularly the Women's Liberation Movement, on the lives of the subjects. The age of each subject at the time of the interviews is

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Table 1
Characteristics of the Final Sample

SUBJECT NUMBER	PSEUDONYM	YEAR BORN	AGE AT INTERVIEW	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	TOTAL HOURS INTERVIEWED	ADDITIONAL CRITERIA
1	Jane Z.	1941	32/34	2/1	4.6	married, typically female occupation
2	Laura Y.	1937	36.5	2	3.4	housewife, mother
3	Karen A.	1942	31.5/ 33	4/1	6.5	housewife, mother, married at 17
4	Merrill K.	1942	31.5	3	5.2	unmarried
5	Patricia R.	1936	38	4	6.5	married, mother, stable life structure
6	Elaine G.	1938	36	3	2.6	unmarried, stable life structure
7	Jennifer H.	1940	35	4	6.5	divorced, mother
8	Joan B.	1938	37	3	4.5	housewife, mother, sustained commit- to family
9	Betty A.	1936	39	3	3.5	housewife, mother, sustained commitment to family, working-class
10	Julie D.	1940	36	4	6.0	sustained commitment to career
11	Roberta S.	1936	39.5	1	2.0	sustained commitment to career

presented in Column #4. In the cases of subjects #1 and #3, a slash mark is used to indicate the woman's age at the initial series of interviews, and also her age at a follow-up interview held approximately a year and half later. The rationale for the follow-up interviews in these two cases will be discussed in Part II. Columns #5 present the total number of interviews held with each subject and the total number of interview hours respectively. In Column #7, additional criteria such as occupational and familial status are presented.

PART TWO

THE PROCESS OF THEORY CONSTRUCTION AND RESULTS

CHAPTER III

STAGE ONE: DEVELOPING A PROVISIONAL CONCEPTION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL PERIOD AROUND AGE 30

Factors in Selecting and Interviewing Subjects #1 and #2

Jane Z. (S#1), a 32-year-old married nurse, was selected according to the procedure outlined in Chapter II. She agreed to participate in the study in the initial phone contact while expressing mild hesitation. Two interviews, one week apart, were held at her home. In order to achieve a basis for comparison, a second subject was interviewed prior to the first stage of data analysis. The only criterion for this additional subject was that she present a different combination of familial and occupational roles than Jane Z.

Laura Y. (S#2), a 36-year-old housewife and mother of three, agreed enthusiastically to be interviewed. Like Jane Z., she had been recommended by an acquaintance. Two interviews were held at her home approximately two weeks apart.

Major Findings from the Data Analysis of Subjects #1 and #2

In the presentation of the findings which follows in this and in subsequent chapters, all quotations, unless otherwise specified, have been drawn from verbatim transcripts of interviews with the subject under discussion, except where identifying information has been disguised or deleted. The data from the first two subjects lent initial support to Levinson's premise that a change in the life

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structure occurs in women around age 30 in which there is an attempt to "get serious," make a more permanent commitment, set down roots, stabilize, "grow up," and plan for the future rather than just "live for the present." The change is initially experienced as an increased sense of urgency to make the desired changes and a sense of time running out to do so.

Jane Z. (S#1) was 32 at the time of the interviews. During the period following graduation from college, she developed competence as a nurse while living in the ghetto of a large Eastern city, developed a strong friendship with a female roommate, and casually dated men. While working on advanced credentials in her field, Jane became increasingly disillusioned. In her spare time, she started a book store with her friend and flourished in an atmosphere of "freedom" and "independence." These years, from age 25 through 27, were characterized by an emphasis on the "joys of the moment":

> We never looked too far into the future. The emphasis was on what was happening at the time: even a year from then was too uncertain. We were younger, very carefree, and had no other responsibilities.

The store folded when her friend left town to be with a man. At 27, Jane began to feel a strong desire to get married and settle down. She was motivated, in part, by her parents' concern, but also by her own sense that marriage would help her attain full adult status:

> I'd go home on holidays. No one wants to be a 27-year-old child at Christmas trotting behind your parents. Holidays became very sad . . . . Being married, you could come home as an adult.

The following year, when she was 28, Jane became involved in a serious relationship with a man. When she discovered herself pregnant, she pressed for marriage, but he resisted and she had an abortion.

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For a year and a half they lived together, and, when she was 30, her lover decided that he was ready for marriage. At the time of the interviews with her, a year and a half later, Jane was very happy to be married but expressed a growing concern about how to integrate children into her life without giving up the financial and emotional autonomy gained through working:

> My big question now is when to start having a family because we definitely want to, but I can't stand the thought of what I'd have to give up. That's the thing about getting married as late as we did . . . . One of the things I dreaded in marriage was that I loved getting and spending my own money. I can't relate to joint money. When I put money in our joint account, I don't even consider it mine. It's like paying off Master Charge.

In summary, Jane's growing sense of urgency to get married at age 27 signified the end of the present-oriented, relatively carefree life structure of her twenties and the beginning of an attempt to stablize her life and make a permanent commitment to a husband and family.

A similar process of change in the life structure around age 30 was illustrated in the case of Laura Y. (S#2) who was 36 at the time of the interviews. Like Jane Z., Laura Y. formed a life structure in her twenties which centered around developing an occupation (as a teacher) dating men, traveling, and generally living for the present. During this period, she felt that she wanted a period of time before marriage "to do what I wanted to do so that when I got married, I wouldn't feel that I never had the chance." By 25, the age at which her mother had married, Laura was finding her work frustrating and unrewarding, and she became quite concerned about finding a suitable husband: "By 25, Mr. Wonderful hadn't come along, and I thought it might not be as simple as I had been imagining."

That same year, Laura moved to the large Eastern city where her parents had met, took a job in an exciting, university-based agency, and began psychoanalysis in order to contain her increasing anxiety about marriage. She also began dating a man who was in the process of obtaining graduate training. Two years later, his upcoming military commitment put pressure on them to make a decision about their future. Laura was still ambivalent, but finally decided in favor of marriage:

> I began to think about things you wouldn't think would lead to a good marriage: "I'm 28, there aren't a lot of nice, single men around anymore. I've never met anyone who conformed to my fantasies and I probably never would."

Once married, Laura experienced a sense of relief and comfort similar to Jane Z.: "I really enjoyed just being married . . . . Our whole relationship improved. I finally had confirmation of myself as a sexual woman. I felt that people automatically thought better of me."

Two years later, when Laura was 31, the couple moved to the university-based community where they have remained ever since, bought a house, and had three children who were born when she was 31, 32, and 35. Although Laura reported that there have been "up and down" periods in the marriage, she had clearly settled into a stable life structure centered around being a wife and mother. Since the birth of her first child she had ceased working and currently expressed no interest in returning to her former occupation.

Like Jane Z., it appeared that Laura Y.'s increased sense of urgency to get married in her middle to late twenties signified the beginning of a change in the elements of the present-oriented, exploratory life structure of her twenties. It took her approximately five years to settle into a stable life structure with the core commitments of being a wife and mother in her early thirties. There were also differences between the two women. While Jane Z. changed her priorities in her late twenties from a primary interest in having a career and living independently as a single woman, Laura Y. retained the stated priorities of her early twenties (to get married) but felt increasingly anxious in her middle and late twenties that she would not be able to accomplish her goals.

Additional Findings

Aside from the major finding that both women appeared to go through a period of developmental change around age 30, certain data were noted as potentially significant in the emerging theory concerning the formation of the early adult life structure in women.

The Dream

Both women reported having a Dream around age 20, but there were striking differences between them, considering how closely the change in life structure appeared to be similar around age 30. In Jane Z.'s case, the Dream centered around strong career ambitions, and marriage was a minor, almost non-existent element:

> I always wanted to . . . work in the inner city. It was my idea of saving the world, going out and helping where you were really needed the most -- the challenge of it -- partially for your own ego to see if you could do it . . . . I certainly wasn't in any hurry to get married at the time or to have children . . . I really never thought about it. I expected to get married someday, but never thought too far ahead.

In contrast, Laura Y. did not describe forming a Dream in her late adolescence, but rather recalled having had an idea of her future for "as long as I could remember":

> I always thought I'd want to get married and have a family. That's what I'd enjoy doing most . . . . My mother always talks about how wonderful my father was. On the first date he said: "If you're as nice as you seem to be, I'm going to marry you." He fell for her right away. My expectation was that I would meet someone who I would feel that way about.

Mentor Relationships

Jane Z.'s relationship with her female roommate during her twenties exhibited qualities of the Mentor relationship described by Levinson: "I admired her independence, spunkiness, taste, life style, and her ability to work, but I relied on her too much." However, in view of Jane's decision to abandon her Dream in her late twenties, it was difficult to assess the ultimate significance of this relationship on her subsequent development.

Laura Y. described forming relationships with two women supervisors in her twenties, but she made an important distinction between admiring these women professionally and wanting to be like them as women:

> She was 13-14 years older than I was . . . very young and very bright. . . . I wanted to be like her . . . . She had a fresh, lively expression, yet still appeared authoritative without being rigid . . . . There was obviously some conflict between admiring C. who wasn't married and feeling that people looked down on me for the same reason . . . . Perhaps it was more certain traits that I admired about her.

In summary, the meaning of Mentor relationships in the formation of women's early adult life structures was not clear from the data obtained from the first two subjects.

Relationships Formed with a Special Man

Neither woman reported forming a relationship with a

Special Man in her early twenties. Furthermore, when both did form significant relationships with men in their late twenties, it was unclear how these relationships related to either woman's initial Dream. To the extent that Jane Z. was forming a second Dream in her late twenties, her husband-to-be served to facilitate her pursuit of a stable family life. In contrast, Laura Y. specifically stated that her ambivalence concerning whether or not to marry her husband was based on the extent to which he was not "Mr. Wonderful." Thus, as Levinson posits in his discussion of a man's relationship with a Special Woman, the data preliminarily supported the premise that a woman's relationship with a Special Man may facilitate or hinder the realization of her Dream, or represent some other part of her self.

Questions Raised by the Findings and Implications for Further Subject Choice

While both Jane Z. and Laura Y. described similar changes in their lives around age 30, both women also reported making identical role changes at this time: from single woman with occupation to wife with minimal or secondary interest in occupation. It was, therefore, impossible to determine whether the reported changes around age 30 reflected a developmental change in the life structures of both women or could be attributed to the role transition associated with marriage. This question led to the decision to next interview a woman who had married at an earlier point in her life and also one who was unmarried by her early thirties. If these additional subjects also reported a period of change around age 30 with common features to those reported by Jane Z. and Laura Y., further support would be lent to the premise that a developmental process was operative.

CHAPTER IV

STAGE TWO: MODIFYING THE THEORY -- THE PERIOD AROUND AGE 30 AS INVOLVING A MAJOR CHANGE IN THE PRIORITIES OF THE LIFE STRUCTURE

Factors in Selecting and Interviewing Subjects #3 and #4

Karen A. (S#3) was selected according to the procedure outlined in Chapter II. A 31½-year-old housewife and mother of five, Karen had married at age 17. Four interviews were held with Karen at her home over a period of three months. The increased number of interviews and increased length of time between interviews was due to two factors: Karen's husband became seriously ill during the course of the interviews and was out of work for a number of weeks. In addition, it was more difficult to obtain a clear picture of Karen's life structure than had been the case with either of the two previous subjects.

Merrill K. (S#4) who was unmarried at the time of the interviews, was referred by Levinson, whom she had contacted after having read an article describing his work on adult development. Merrill had expressed an interest in speaking with Levinson because, at 31, she felt herself to be in the middle of a crisis and hoped that he could offer her some assistance. After she had been informed that the purpose of the present study was to gain information rather than to be therapeutic, Merrill still expressed an interest in participating. In exchange for her time, a therapeutic consultation was provided for her following the data collection. Subsequently, Merrill moved 3000 miles away and it was impossible to obtain written permission from her to use the interview material in the write-up of the study. Although Merrill had been given a copy of the explanatory letter that was sent to all subjects (See Appendix B), and had verbally consented to the use of the interview material, direct quotations have been omitted from the following discussion of her data.

Major Findings from the Data Analysis of Subjects #1 through #4

The theory that a change in the life structure occurs in women around age 30 in which there is an attempt to move from a present-oriented, relatively carefree life structure to a more permanent, stable structure required modification following the addition of subjects #3 and #4. The data did support the existence of a period of change around age 30 involving a dramatic shift in priorities from those that had characterized the twenties' life structure. All four women at this age appeared to be asking: To what am I going to commit myself for the next period of years? To what extent will my life be built around a family? To what extent will it be built outside of a family? What place shall I give a man, child or occupation in my life?

The attempt to move from a present-oriented structure to a more permanent, stable structure around age 30 characterized those women who had not married by that age (Jane Z., Laura Y., and Merrill K.). For example, Merrill K. described a current wish for greater stability in her life: a more stable relationship with a man than she had experienced in her twenties and the possibility of becoming a mother. This increased sense of urgency to "settle down" added support to similar data obtained from Jane Z. and Laura Y. In contrast, Karen A., who had been married for over 10 years by the time she was interviewed, was, at 31, anticipating a shift to an increased interest in some activity beyond her familial commitments when her youngest child began school full-time:

> When J. gets into school, I have no intention of staying here all day doing my housework . . . . I'd like to go back to school or something like that . . . . I want to do something to keep the door open until I can decide . . . . Turning 30 said: "You'd better hurry up and get going." People think nothing of a 25 year old going back to school, but a 35 year old?

In summarizing the major findings at this point in the data analysis, the following elements of a theory of the formation of the early adult life structure in women had emerged:

1) A period of change occurs around age 30 for women involving a major shift in priorities from those which have characterized the life structure of the twenties. This shift in priorities is accompanied by an increase in anxiety and a sense of urgency to make desired changes.

2) Women differ in terms of the nature of the shift in priorities and the types of elements that they attempt to integrate into their lives around age 30. For women who have formed the core of their lives around wifehood and motherhood, the shift involves an attempt to integrate extrafamilial activities without disrupting the core commitment to the family. For women who have not married by their middle to late twenties, an increased sense of urgency to make a stable relationship with a man and to have children may occur around this age.

Additional Findings

Elaborations on the significance of the Dream, Mentor

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relationships and relationships with the Special Man were suggested by data from subjects #3 and #4.

The Dream

In contrast to Jane Z. and Laura Y. who reported having a Dream by the time they were 20 which they attempted to realize during the subsequent decade, Karen A. and Merrill K. both reported having experienced difficulty in formulating a sense-of-self-in-the-adult-world at this age.

Karen A. reported that throughout high school she had wanted to "do this fantastic thing in music." She enrolled in music school following graduation but quickly gave up her plans upon discovering that her husband had greater natural ability:

> I was going to do some fantastic thing, you know, and go to school. I don't think so much as a concert pianist but in the field of popular music. I had a big thing about that . . . . I still kept going to school after we were married but one night he . . . started to play and I said, "Forget it!" because he was so good. It must not be my thing, or whatever.

The relative ease with which Karen gave up her Dream and her apparent lack of concern with future goals is typical of the manner in which her life structure evolved during her twenties. At 22, after having been married for five years and with two children, Karen divorced her husband only to remarry him the following year with the goal of "finishing up together what we started." The divorce followed a period of a year and a half during which time her husband completed his military duty, and the couple were attempting to set up a household of their own for the first time. Previously, Karen had lived with her mother while her husband was in the service, and the couple's first two children were essentially raised by their maternal grandmother. By the time she was 23, Karen felt that she and her husband had worked through some "communication problems" and were ready to make another start. The next five years brought two additional children and continual moves in response to her husband's inability to settle on an occupation. Finally, the year she turned 28, her life structure appeared to be stabilizing. The couple bought a house in a congenial neighborhood, her husband settled for a position in the civil service that provided good benefits and the promise of an early retirement, and she had a tubal ligation following the birth of their fifth child. Yet, at 31, Karen lacked any sense of what type of job or schooling she might pursue when her youngest child began kindergarten in a year and expressed a deep concern, which was difficult to comprehend, that her interest in extrafamilial activities might significantly disrupt the family.

Merrill K. described similar difficulties in forming a Dream that could become the basis for a life structure in her twenties. Culminating a marginal adjustment throughout college, she made a suicidal gesture her senior year following a rejection by a boyfriend whom she hoped would marry her. Her adolescent fantasy had been to enter the business world, but she felt unsupported by both parents and professors. At 23, Merrill returned to the large Eastern city where she had grown up and attempted to form an occupation as a social worker. In the course of the next five years, she maintained a life structure which contained both working at her career, which she was finding increasingly unrewarding and monotonous, and maintaining a love affair with a man who introduced her to prostitution as a means of augmenting her financial status and dwindling sense of control over her life. This tenuous life structure collapsed when she was 28 with the simultaneous loss of the relationship with her lover and her job.

For the three years prior to the interviews with her, Merrill described herself as "drifting." Her decision, at age 31, to move to the West Coast was based on her recognition of a need to build a new life structure which would be more stable and less self-destructive. The elements of this life structure, she anticipated, would include finding a career that was challenging, forming a more stable and satisfying relationship with a man, and possibly having a child. From the point of view of her development, Merrill seemed to be attempting to form a Dream at 31 which would give her a basis to build a more satisfying life structure in her thirties. Based on the extent to which she had been unable to form a satisfactory life structure in her twenties, there were good reasons to believe that she would experience significant difficulties in accomplishing this task.

What seemed potentially significant at this point in the data analysis was the emerging relationship between the quality of Dream formation around age 20 and the larger difficulty of forming an early adult life structure in the twenties. The two women who lacked a viable Dream around age 20 (Karen A. and Merrill K.) were also those who reported the most confusion in forming a new life structure in their early thirties.

Mentor Relationships and Relationships Formed with a Special Man

Data from subjects #3 and #4 continued to suggest wide variation among women in terms of the quality of relationships formed during

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their twenties. Karen A., in describing the reasons why she was attracted to her husband at 17, portrayed him as a Special Man -- both for his maturity and for the musical talent that she craved personally. However, as their relationship developed in her twenties, she ceased to describe her husband in these positive terms and, in view of his difficulty in assuming adult responsibilities, he no longer seemed to embody the same qualities of maturity and talent. Since she was unable to articulate a coherent sense of direction in describing this period of her life, it was difficult to understand what role Karen's husband played in either facilitating or hindering her development.

Merrill K. reported a different pattern of relationships in her twenties. In examining her life structure during this decade, Erikson's description of the formation of a negative identity seemed apt (1968). Consistently, Merrill's lover appeared to serve both as a Special Man and as an anti-mentor, to coin the correlate of Levinson's term, since, by encouraging her prostitution, he supported the formation of a negative identity well into her twenties.

In reviewing the four subjects studied at this point, Jane Z. and Merrill K. both formed significant relationships during their early twenties with a woman and a man, respectively, who, to some extent, fulfilled the mentoring function. Karen A. described a lack of direction and, correspondingly, did not describe forming a relationship with anyone who served as a model. In Laura Y.'s case, while she described forming relationships with supervisors who served as models for adult women which went directly counter to her expressed Dream of marriage and family, she also appeared to be making strong efforts to model herself directly after her mother.

Questions Raised by the Findings and Implications for Further Subject Choice

While data from the first four subjects supported the existence of a period of developmental change around age 30 during which a major change in priorities from the twenties' life structure occurs, it was still questionable whether the reported changes were truly indicative of a developmental process. The fact that both Karen A. and Merrill K. exhibited such extreme difficulty in forming an early adult life structure during their twenties led to a closer investigation of the first two subjects. While Jane Z. and Laura Y. exhibited less difficulty than the latter two, the data still pointed to a great deal of confusion in their lives.

For example, Jane Z., although externally building a career in her twenties, did not use that period to form an identity that included being a nurse, and, she readily dropped her career ambitions once she married. At 32, she had only the vaguest idea of what she might do with her professional training and seemed ambivalent about motherhood. Laura Y., while claiming that her interest was always in becoming a wife and mother, stated, at one point in her late twenties, that she considered obtaining further professional training, but then willingly dropped the whole enterprise upon marriage. Yet, at 36, having established a life structure that consisted of exactly what she thought she wanted, she indicated signs of dissatisfaction: lack of sexual interest, and fears about what she would do once her children were in school full-time.

The latter two subjects showed even more severe signs of chronic confusion: Karen A. married at 17, divorced at 22, and remarried the same man at 23 with the expressed intent of "finishing up what we had started." Why then, did this couple have two additional children when this created severe financial strain on her husband, who was still unable to settle for an occupation, and substantially hindered Karen in her expressed interest of wanting to get involved in something to do outside the family? Merrill K., at 31, spoke in the same breath about going to medical school and marrying a rich man to support her. She seemed barely to be keeping her head above water.

In all cases, at this stage of the data analysis, the women in this sample as they approached age 30, either abandoned the twenties' life structure, attempted to break away from it, or seemed confused about how to build on it. The findings, in this respect, were surprisingly consistent with Levinson's data in which 62% of his male sample reported moderate to severe crises around age 30 (Levinson et al., Note 1). It seemed possible that the findings from this study reflected the fact that women, like men, experience significant difficulty in forming an early adult life structure, and that this becomes increasingly apparent around age 30, when, according to Levinson, there is an increased sense of urgency to settle for a particular life structure and make more permanent commitments within it.

Another possible interpretation of the data was that these four women represented a particularly unstable group, and that the turmoil and confusion they reported around age 30 was indicative of chronic states rather than of a developmental transition. In order to determine this, two additional subjects were selected who reported and

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demonstrated by their mid-thirties that they had established relatively stable, satisfactory life structures. If these women still reported major changes in their priorities around age 30, this would lend stronger support for the premise that a developmental transition occurs at this time in women's lives.

The decision to interview two additional subjects was based on a desire to replicate the choices made by Karen A. and Merrill K.: early commitment to marriage and family in the former case; and early commitment to being unmarried up to the time of the interviews, in the latter case. Furthermore, it was decided that all additional subjects should be at least 35, in order to permit an increased perspective in examining the period around age 30, which had not been possible with Jane Z., Karen A., or Merrill K., all of whom were still very much in the midst of life changes at the time they were interviewed.

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CHAPTER V

STAGE THREE: ELABORATING THE THEORY -- SOME IMPLICATIONS OF NOT MAKING CHANGES IN THE LIFE STRUCTURE AROUND AGE 30

Factors in Selecting and Interviewing Subjects #5 and #6

As stated in the previous chapter, the criteria for selecting subjects #5 and #6 were that they both report and demonstrate relatively stable, satisfactory life structures by their mid-thirties. How to determine this was another question! Levinson states that the satisfactoriness of a life structure can be determined by the extent to which it is "viable in society and suitable to the self" (Levinson et al., Note 1). With these criteria in mind, two women were selected who were known through my previous work experience. In these contexts, both women had indicated that they were fairly content with their lives and had specifically expressed an interest and willingness to be interviewed for this study. In addition, they had established positive reputations in the community for their contributions to various social agencies.

Patricia R. (S#5) had been married for 16 years and had three children. In addition, at age 38, she maintained an active commitment to working in various community agencies, although she had not formed a specific career identity per se. Within a two-month period, a total of four interviews were held alternately at her home and office.

Elaine G. (S#6) volunteered to participate when she was asked to name unmarried women professionals who would be willing to be interviewed for the study. At age 36, she stated that she was sympathetic to the difficulties of obtaining subjects for a doctoral dissertation as she was currently working on one herself. Three interviews were held at her office over a period of a month and a half.

In interviewing Patricia R. and Elaine G., it was hoped that wider applicability of the existence of a developmental period around age 30 could be determined: Were there consistent developmental changes which would be evident even in women who had established relatively stable and satisfactory life structures by their mid-thirties? If so, need this period involve the major shift in priorities that was observed in the first four subjects? However, since the interviews with subjects #5 and #6 raised questions concerning the current satisfactoriness of both women's life structures, the question of whether a developmental change occurs around age 30 for women who have formed a satisfactory life structure by their mid-thirties could not be answered. Rather, the data analysis suggested implications of failing to address flaws in the life structure around age 30, where they existed.

Major Findings from the Data Analysis of Subjects #1 through #6

Analysis of material from subjects #5 and #6 led to further elaboration of the significance of the period around age 30 in the development of women. The data continued to confirm previous findings that, around this age, some women make major changes in their life structures before creating a new life structure in their early to mid-thirties. What became evident in analysing the data from subjects #5 and #6 was that not all women make changes in their life structures during this period; or, if they do, the changes may not adequately address the flaws in the life structure developed during the twenties. The data suggested that where serious flaws were present and unacknowledged, subsequent development might be hindered or disrupted.

Patricia R. was an example of a woman who made significant changes in her life structure around age 30,but where the changes did not adequately address flaws in her life structure at this time. These unresolved problems then emerged in crisis proportion during the subsequent decade.

Patricia, who was 38 at the time of the interviews, had created what she believed in her twenties to be a relatively satisfactory life structure based on core commitments to wifehood and motherhood. Her Dream, which was fully elaborated during college, was to marry a college professor and to create a family together within the context of a community where he would organize for social change. The man she married upon graduation fit this image of the Special Man to a tee. The young couple settled in the university community where he attended graduate school and became actively involved in local politics which formed the basis for both their personal network of friends and Patricia's husband's work.

While she was involved in political work, Patricia saw her primary task as raising their two children, born when she was 24 and 27, and to support her husband emotionally. The year she turned 30, a number of events occurred which, in retrospect, indicated both the existence of problems in the marriage and a dramatic shift in Patricia's priorities. Her husband, who had recently been appointed to a full-time administrative position, developed an interest in another woman. In addition, although they had not planned to have any more children, Patricia found herself pregnant. Furthermore, she had been feeling increasing ideological tension within the political group, and made a dramatic decision to drop out although her husband remained an active participant. With the birth of their third child when she was 32, Patricia took a full-time position as a research associate, and decided that from that point on she would have a career for the rest of her life.

The next three years were exciting ones for her as she gained increased self-esteem both as a professional and as a sexually-attractive woman. At age 35, she found herself involved in a passionate affair with one of her co-workers. A marital crisis ensued, and for a brief time she considered leaving her family, but decided that she could not sacrifice the life structure she had spent 14 years building:

> I started to think: "If I leave, I'll be living alone. I may never get married again." That summer, I began to feel old for the first time . . . . It depends on how you define love . . . .We've worked out many things during the years and I feel very comfortable in the family.

Patricia's resolution was clearly a compromise. Her extra-marital love affair had made her supremely aware of a major limitation of her marriage, the suppression of her sexuality, which she had been previously denying as a problem. What seemed significant, however, was that Patricia came to this realization in her mid-thirties, and to give up an otherwise satisfactory life structure based on her family life and a part-time career was too great a sacrifice. She admitted that she only felt comfortable accepting job offers where it would be unlikely that she would be tempted to have another affair. At 38, she

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seemed confused about how to build on her life structure without destroying it.

In summary, Patricia R. was an example of a woman who, like Karen A., had made a major commitment to marriage and family in her twenties, and, around age 30, began to consider expanding her interests beyond the roles of wife and mother. However, Patricia's shift to a career commitment at this time did not adequately address problems in her marriage, and this appeared to have resulted in a marital crisis in her mid-thirties. The data offered tentative confirmation of Levinson's contention that making major changes in the life structure during the thirties is extremely difficult (Levinson et al., Note 1).

This premise that failure to address flaws in the life structure around age 30 was associated with dissatisfaction in the thirties led to a review of the data from Laura Y., who had gone back into therapy at age 34 after the birth of her second child, and at age 36, expressed other signs of discontent. In giving up a career and life as a single woman which also included dating and travel, for a commitment to a husband and family at age 29, Laura certainly appeared to be making major changes in her life structure. But perhaps this change was only superficial. It was previously noted that unlike Jane Z., Laura Y. did not raise questions about the viability of her Dream around age 30. She had stated that marriage and family were most important to her for as long as she could remember; yet, the fact that she had not married earlier seemed to reflect ambivalence about her Dream rather than a genuine interest in building a career. In fact, there was strong evidence that she did not even give herself the opportunity to explore how important a career might become to her. The data, indeed, suggested that the life structure that Laura developed in her twenties restricted her potential for development, just as Patricia's life structure had denied the importance of her sexuality. Subsequently, Laura's dissatisfaction in her mid-thirties might well have been related to the fact that, like Patricia R., she did not address the flaws in her twenties' life structure around age 30.

In the case of Elaine G. (S#6), significant external changes were made in the life structure around age 30, but it was difficult to understand the internal significance of these changes or their effect on her subsequent development. The major difficulty in analysing the data from Elaine's interviews was her unwillingness to either talk openly about her life or to admit that she didn't wish to participate in the study. While verbally insisting on her desire to continue the interviews, she repeatedly forgot or cancelled appointments at the last minute; interrupted the interviews to accept phone calls or talk with people; refused to state her home phone number, claiming that she was never there; answered direct questions with minimal elaboration; and rarely offered spontaneous comments. What could be deduced from the interview data, as much from what she omitted as from what she said, was that, in terms of her career, her life structure had developed satisfactorily throughout her twenties and thirties. In other respects, however, she had changed minimally and the lack of change or even questioning of her initial choices appeared to be associated with a lack of further psychosocial maturation.

She attended college in her home town where she maintained an active social life and gave little thought to the future. In her senior year she was briefly engaged, but broke it off when she decided that she was not really interested in marriage:

> It was only the glory that interested me -- the wedding, the party . . . . I never wanted to get married because I didn't want to be tied down. I always had the feeling that I couldn't stay married that long because it's hard for me to stay and do one thing for a long time. My interests change, and I move on . . . . After I realized where I was at, I knew that I only got engaged because that's what everyone else was doing. I told the fellow I changed my mind -- that it just wasn't for me.

Following graduation, Elaine moved back to her parents' home and, on the urging of her mother, obtained nursing credentials and a position at a local hospital. She enjoyed her work and developed the ambition of becoming the nursing supervisor when the current supervisor retired. At age 28, she applied for the position and was accepted, although she had far less experience than any of the other applicants.

Elaine described the period following her becoming supervisor as filled with new opportunities:

> When I became supervisor, I became more interested in going to different types of things like museums, affairs, shows, elegant dinner parties. The whole world opened up to me when I got this job.

Despite an important advancement in her career, Elaine continued to live with her parents and maintained a close, dependent relationship with them. She also continued to disclaim the need for other intimate relationships: "I don't have time for people." Furthermore, while currently at age 36 she is hoping to move up to an administrative position in the Department of Health, she also discussed the possibility of "switching careers every five years or so." She stated that she was unable to make commitments. The following quotation in which Elaine described her life during college, could just as easily describe

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her attitude at 36:

> I always knew my parents were there and would always be there, and that I could live with them forever if I wanted . . . . Why move away? It was free, so I could take trips all over the U.S. and buy cars and clothes. I had my own private library and my own phone.

While Elaine claimed to be contented with her life, it was difficult to dismiss the extent to which she had chosen to avoid relationships, particularly because of the casual glibness with which she described her decisions, and her apparent lack of awareness that making a choice involves the acceptance of loss as well as gain. A more likely conclusion is that, by avoiding the Eriksonian stage of Intimacy vs. Isolation, Elaine's subsequent psychosocial development was limited. She indirectly confirmed this interpretation in the following statement:

> I don't think I've changed, do you? . . . . My friends that I had when I was a child say: "You're the only one who has stuck by what they said and followed it." I did, from the early years of my life -- had it all mapped out except I didn't want to be a nurse -- thought more about law. I never wanted to get into anything permanent that I couldn't get out of. That's why I never took up smoking: I didn't want any habits.

Elaine's case illustrated one of the risks implicit in a study of this type. The interviewer's ability to draw inferences from the data is largely dependent upon a subject's willingness to cooperate in the joint project of exploration. In Elaine's case, one could offer speculations but no firm conclusions.

In summary, the data from Patricia R. and Elaine G. supported the premise that the period around age 30 presents an opportunity for women to make changes in the life structure established in the twenties. Furthermore, the data suggested that where serious flaws were present in the life structure but not acknowledged, these flaws might emerge disruptively during subsequent periods of development, or at least limit the process of further psychosocial growth until they were adequately addressed.

Additional Findings

The Dream

In the last chapter, tentative evidence from subjects #1 through #4 was presented which suggested that a woman's difficulty in forming a new, satisfactory life structure by her early to mid-thirties might be related to the extent to which she had formed a viable Dream around age 20 which could be realized during her twenties. The data from subjects #5 and #6 did not contradict this idea, but rather suggested elaborations on the significance of Dream formation, specifically in cases where a Dream is formed around age 20, but is significantly flawed.

The data from Patricia R. was most clearly interpretable. In describing her Dream of becoming the wife of a college professor, Patricia noted that her highest value in deciding who to marry was that he be a "good man." Following her affair 15 years later, she began to understand that this choice represented a denial of her sexuality: "I was aware when I married M. that I didn't respond to him sexually, but I always said to myself: 'That was great, sex wasn't important!' . . . . I didn't admit it was important for 15 years." She traced this attitude to the fact that "sex was negated by my family . . . . They were close, but not physically affectionate." Thus, Patricia's Dream could be viewed as reflecting her family's discomfort with sex. To the extent that she built a life structure in her twenties based on this Dream, her capacity to develop an intimate relationship with her husband was significantly restricted. The extent to which Patricia associated having an extramarital affair at age 35 with rebelling against the values of her family of origin becomes clear in the following statement:

> I began to do things I was never allowed to do as an adolescent: changing my style of dress, going dancing . . . . I began to see my husband as a father and me as a bad girl.

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted how Laura Y., like Patricia R., did not appear to question her life structure around age 30, and how this lack of acknowledgement of the flaws in her twenties' life structure at this time might have been related to her dissatisfaction in her mid-thirties. In reviewing Laura's Dream, it became clearer that, like Patricia R., Laura had formed a Dream which was overly restrictive. In wanting to "marry Mr. Wonderful . . . who was very similar to my father minus his faults," Laura restricted herself to fulfilling an adolescent or possibly even pre-adolescent image of her parents' marriage, and did not allow herself the opportunity of exploring other possibilities, both in relationships with men and women and in career development, during her twenties:

> There are lots of reasons that affected my trouble getting married. My mother always talked about how wonderful my father was. On the first date, he said: "If you're as nice as you seem to be, I'm going to marry you." My expectation was that I would meet someone who I would feel that way about, and I never, never had that feeling . . . . If I were 21 now, and if I disagreed with my parents' opinions as I do now, I may have gotten married earlier . . . . I'm continually comparing myself with my mother . . . . You could say emotionally that I've never left home. I'm far more involved with my parents than anyone else I know.

Erikson (1968) has previously described this premature restriction of development in his description of "identity foreclosure."

In summary, both Laura Y. and Patricia R. formed a Dream which was flawed in that it was overly restrictive, and the restrictiveness represented, among other things, an attempt to maintain the values of their families of origin. In reviewing Merrill K.'s data, it appeared that the "negative identity" which she developed in her twenties was also, in fact, based on a flawed Dream which was overly restrictive. In her case, wanting to be on her own without "bosses", and more specifically, not wanting to get married, represented attempts to form a life structure which she believed was in opposition to her family's values and expectations for her. This was further confirmed by the fact that she stated a number of times during the interviews that her mother had always wanted her to get married, and that she took great satisfaction at age 31 that she had not fulfilled this expectation.

In Elaine G.'s case, it was more difficult to evaluate the quality of Dream formation. In her early twenties, Elaine formed a Dream of becoming a nursing supervisor which she unexpectedly realized at the age of 28. Upon achieving her goal, she then aspired to the next rung on the occupational ladder: being promoted to an administrative position in the Department of Health. In its emphasis on occupation, Elaine's Dream most closely resembled those of the men in Levinson's sample (Levinson et al., Note 1). While forming the basis for her ultimately successful achievement, Elaine's Dream could also be seen as quite restrictive: Not only did it lack a place for interpersonal relationships, except by maintaining a close, dependent relationship with her parents, but in addition, there was no evidence that Elaine expected that achieving her occupational goal would change

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her world in any significant way. In other words, there was no expectation on her part that the adult world would be qualitatively different from the pre-adult world. Since, as Levinson describes, a primary function of the Dream is to project a sense of self into the adult world, it was not clear how Elaine's Dream functioned to facilitate the development of an adult life structure.

Mentor Relationships and Relationships Formed with a Special Man

Data from subjects #5 and #6 supported a conception of relationships formed in the twenties as being consistent with the quality and content of a woman's Dream at this time. The women who reported forming a Dream which involved forming an occupational identity or living independently as single women, tended to form significant relationships with men or women who served as models and most closely approximated the Mentor relationship described by Levinson.

Examples of this type of relationship from the data were: Jane Z.'s relationship with her female roommate, Merrill K.'s relationship with her male lover, and Elaine G.'s relationship with the nurse supervisor whom she succeeded at age 28:

> When I first came here to this job , I tried to be just like her. All of her decisions were the most perfect decisions. To me, she never made a mistake . . . . She's a gourmet cook and I've become a gourmet cook. She redoes furniture. We have a lot of the same interests . . . . She helped me get the job . . . . When I first came here I was scared to death, but I talked to her the whole summer and she taught me all the ropes. Everytime I needed her help after I took over, she was right there.

Consistent with the apparent lack of change in other aspects of Elaine's life, her relationship with her Mentor had not appeared to evolve beyond the idealistic image described above in the last 13 years.

In contrast, women who reported forming a Dream with marriage and motherhood as the central elements (Laura Y. and Patricia R.) did not describe forming Mentor relationships in their twenties. Laura Y. came closest in her ambivalent relationship with two women supervisors, but these relationships were, in fact, formed in her early twenties while she was postponing realizing her Dream and was, instead, living as a single woman and pursuing an occupation. The person who had served most fully as a model for Laura throughout her twenties and thirties had been her mother. The influence of the mother as a model was less clear in Patricia R.'s case. While Patricia did not report consciously modelling herself after her mother and in fact described a negative relationship with her, there was evidence that the marriage she developed in her twenties replicated some of the aspects of her parents' relationship. Clearly, the most significant relationship formed by Patricia in her early twenties was with her husband, who served as a Special Man by creating a world with her in which she could live out her Dream of wifehood and motherhood.

In Karen A.'s case, her relationship with a Special Man served a different function, that of facilitating her attempt to become more independent from her mother by at least, externally, assisting her in creating a new home base apart from her family of origin.

In summary, the data suggested that women form significant relationships in their twenties which are consistent with other elements of their life structures at this time, including the quality and content of their Dreams. There was tentative evidence to suggest that women who form a Dream with the primary components being living as a single woman and forming an occupation, tend to form relationships with men and women who serve as models and most closely replicate the type of relationship Levinson describes as the Mentor relationship in his sample of men. On the other hand, women who form a Dream with the primary components of marriage and motherhood seem to be highly influenced by their mothers during their twenties, and seek a relationship with a Special Man in order to live out their Dream. The data further suggested that where a woman is experiencing difficulty in separating from her family of origin, that marriage may serve as a vehicle to facilitate this process.

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CHAPTER VI

STAGE FOUR: SUPPORTING THE THEORY -- PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT AROUND AGE 30, THE QUALITY OF DREAM FORMATION AND SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS FORMED IN THE TWENTIES

Factors in Selecting and Interviewing Subject #7

At this stage of the data analysis, what appeared most significant was the extent of ambivalence and confusion that characterized the lives of the women in the sample. Discussions with Levinson confirmed this impression, even in view of his findings that the majority of men go through a moderate to severe crisis during the Age-Thirty Transition (Levinson, Note 2). It was decided on the basis of this comparison that the initial framework for selecting female subjects lacked a category for divorced women. Karen A. had divorced, but she seemed atypical in that she had remarried her husband a year later and, furthermore, it was difficult to assess her life structure at age 31 adequately in order to put her divorce in a developmental context.

The decision was made to interview a woman who had divorced around age 30 to gain further understanding of the developmental issues at this point in a woman's life. Jenny H. (S#7) had divorced at age 28 and, at 35, was on the verge of a second divorce. In contrast with Karen A., who also voiced confusion about the future at the time of the interviews with her, Jenny was both more articulate and willing to discuss openly personal aspects of her life. Four interviews were held with her at her home within a two-month period.

It became clear following the interviews with Jenny H., however, that the selection of her as a subject had not been dictated by the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. The point was not merely to include women who had made distinct life choices, but to add subjects systematically as issues emerged in the process of data analysis. Subjects #5 and #6 had been selected with the aim of determining the applicability of the period around age 30 for women who had achieved a stable, satisfactory life structure by their early to mid-thirties. Since there was evidence to suggest that neither Patricia R. nor Elaine G. met this criterion, additional subjects should have been selected along a similar line of inquiry. The consequence of interviewing Jenny H. was that the data could not confirm aspects of the emerging theory concerning the formation of the early adult life structure in women but, rather, produced repetitive information.

Follow-up Interviews

By this stage of the data analysis, almost two years had passed since the first subject had been interviewed. Rather than selecting additional subjects at this point, follow-up interviews were solicited from Jane Z., Karen A., and Merrill K., all of whom were under 35 at the time of their initial interviews.

Merrill K., who had moved to the West Coast, was unavailable for follow-up, but interviews were held with Jane Z. and Karen A. 22 months and 13 months, respectively, following their initial series of interviews.

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Findings from the Data Analysis of 7 Subjects Including Follow-up Data from Subjects #1 and #3

The Period around Age 30 as an Opportunity to Reassess the Provisional Life Structure of the Twenties

The data at this point in the analysis continued to confirm the conception of the period around age 30 as an opportunity for women to make desired changes in their twenties' life structure. In this context, one could then view the twenties' life structure as intrinsically provisional, as Levinson suggests, as it anticipates the creation of a new life structure in the thirties. The quality of this new life structure appeared dependent, to a large extent, on the quality of the life structure formed during the twenties. Of particular interest were the consequences of a woman having created a life structure based on marriage and family vs. remaining single during her twenties. The data also suggested that where serious flaws in the twenties' life structure are not addressed around age 30, these flaws might emerge disruptively during subsequent periods of development and limit the process of further psychosocial growth.

An example of the reassessment of the life structure around age 30, where commitments to marriage and motherhood were not made until this age, was produced from the follow-up data obtained from Jane Z. (S#1).

By age 34, Jane and her husband had bought their "dream house" in the country, she had recently given birth to their first child, and she reported a sense of contentment with life as a "suburban housewife" that she never believed would have been possible two years ago:

> Now I'd have to brace myself to go back to work I

> certainly don't miss it. If R. were the kind of man who urged me to stay home, I'd do it, but I feel guilty letting him carry the whole financial burden . . . . I guess if you're not there to save the world, somebody else will do it [See p. 33 for reference to her initial Dream].

Because Jane was now clearly entering a period of stability, she could describe the extent to which she was still in a transitional period two years earlier:

> Two years ago, it was like two single people living together financially. He had his money and I had mine. It was hard to think of everything as being jointly ours. And now it's a lot easier, money and other things, too . . . . Buying the house was the turning point. That's when we really first started thinking in terms of us.

Indications that the transitional period had yielded to a period of stability was further evident from Jane's changed future perspective:

> Now is about the first time in my life, if someone asks me where I expect to be in five or ten years, I can see it now because everything is more settled. I can easily see five years from now being with R. and the baby and having a house.

The Period around Age 30 as an Extended Crisis

Interview data from Jenny H. and Karen A. provided examples of another pattern around age 30. In contrast to Jane Z., these women, having dismantled the major elements of their twenties' life structure, were exhibiting significant difficulties in terminating the reassessment stage and forming a new life structure in their early to mid-thirties. The data suggested that these subjects had made particularly bad starts in forming a provisional life structure during their twenties, and it was not surprising, in their efforts to improve their lives, that they were running into substantial internal and external hurdles. Data from Jenny H. and follow-up data from

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Karen A. added to previously discussed material regarding Merrill K. to provide examples of this particular pattern of development around age 30.

Following what she described as a very unhappy childhood and adolescence, Jenny H. moved to a large Eastern city at age 20 in order to put some distance between herself and her mother. Within two years, she married a man eight years older who seemed "paternal." Marriage to B. allowed her to be adopted by his close-knit Italian family and, in particular, brought her a mother-in-law whom she described as "the mother I never really had." Two children were born when Jenny was 23 and 24. Within a year following the marriage, her husband's positive paternal qualities began to seem oppressive to her. It took her, however, until age 28 to gather the courage to divorce him.

Following the divorce, Jenny resolved to "give myself time to decide what I really wanted from life." However, within two years, tremendous insecurity and personal loneliness led her prematurely into a second marriage. While in some ways an improvement on the first, Jenny's second husband, a sensual but irresponsible younger man, could not help her to form the stable life that she craved. Within a year following the second marriage, she was involved in an extramarital affair and considered leaving her husband. At the time of the interviews with her, Jenny had been separated from her second husband for almost a year and was filing for divorce.

In examining her extended crisis from approximately age 28 through 35, it became clear how Jenny was, in part, attempting to deal with the same issues of separation that she had been struggling with in her mother's home at age 20. Comparing her descriptions of leaving home with her first divorce, one notes the repeated emphasis on breaking out of an oppressive structure without any focus on building a future. At age 20:

> I didn't know what I wanted -- didn't know where my head was at. I knew I was unhappy at home so the major focus was on that rather than considering my future. I was more just trying to resolve the present . . . . I knew I wanted to be happy, but I didn't have any sense of what . . . . I guess I'd thought about getting married but that was not my major concern . . . . It was a major decision to be on my own, to handle things myself.

And, at the time of her first divorce, at age 28:

> I don't think I had any idea at the time of what I wanted. I knew a life couldn't exist and be that unhappy . . . . I wanted to be alone, away from him. I thought, "Who the hell else would want me," but that wasn't what was most important. What was most important was the present, not my future.

Despite her difficulties, Jenny had made significant changes in her life structure over the past 15 years. In the past two years, she had begun personal psychotherapy with a woman therapist, and, under the guidance of a male employer, was becoming interested in forming an occupation as a teacher. With the aid of her two Mentors, her therapist and her employer, Jenny appeared to be beginning to form an image of the future which seemed both optimistic and realizable, in other words, a viable Dream.

Data from the follow-up interview with Karen A. confirmed a previous interpretation that she, too, was in an extended crisis in her early thirties.

She had separated from her husband soon after the initial series of interviews and was in the process of seeking a second divorce from him. As with Jenny H., Karen's second divorce seemed to be a repeated attempt to achieve a separation from her mother as well as

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her husband. This becomes evident when one compares her descriptions of the two separations. Describing her divorce at age 22, she stated:

> It was probably the first time I ever realized that my mother had nothing really to do with my life. She was aghast, in complete disagreement. It was the first time I did anything she didn't approve of. I felt very independent. I did it myself. It was the first time I really did something on my own.

And at age 33:

> Of course, my family doesn't understand it . . . . It's made it a lot easier. Whatever I decide to do, I won't have to hassle over, won't have to ask anybody. I feel I'm freer to do whatever I want -- no one to answer to. I like that. It's the first time I've ever felt that way.

It came as little surprise that the women, thus far, in the sample who exhibited the greatest difficulty settling into a stable life structure by their early to mid-thirties, were also those who reported the most significant deprivation in childhood and adolescence. Although the interviews were primarily focused on the post-adolescent years, the following data were of interest:

Jenny H.'s parents divorced when she was five years old. She described a physically-abusive father, a poor relationship with her mother, and multiple moves and changes of households during her childhood including a period of time spent in an orphanage.

Karen A.'s father died of cancer when she was 12 years old following a five-year illness. She described feeling terrified after his death that the household would fall apart in view of her mother's apparent helplessness.

Merrill K.'s parents did not divorce; however, she described multiple parental separations and estrangements, changes of households, an alcoholic father, and a very poor relationship with her mother.

While not in itself conclusive, these data took on significance when compared with similar data from the remaining subjects (Jane Z., Laura Y., Patricia R., and Elaine G.), all four of whom reported growing up in stable, intact, middle-class families.

The Effect of the Quality of Dream Formation on the Provisional Life Structure of the Twenties

The data continued to support the significance of forming a Dream by the early twenties as a basis upon which to create a provisional life structure in the twenties. In the previous chapter, data were presented suggesting that when a woman forms an overly-restrictive Dream at this time, she tends to be highly influenced by perceived parental expectations, and her Dream reflects her attempt to comply with or defy her parents. Data from the follow-up interview with Jane Z. further supported the premise that when an overly-restrictive Dream leads to a premature restriction of exploration during the twenties, the period around age 30 may be used to make dramatic changes both in the Dream and in the resulting life structure.

Jane Z.'s life structure at age 34 was in marked contrast to her expressed Dream at age 20 of wanting to move to a big, Eastern city and become a nurse in the ghetto. The fact that she abandoned this Dream entirely in the period from age 28 through 34, rather than building on it or integrating it into her life structure, indicated that this early Dream did not allow for the exploration of other parts of the self beyond her interest in forming a career. In fact, Jane's Dream seemed primarily expressive of her ambivalence about

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forming a life structure which would too closely replicate her family of origin and the values of the provincial community in which she had grown up. In the process of change which took place around age 30, Jane gradually became more accepting of the ways in which she wanted a family life similar to her parents . In the first series of interviews with her at age 32, Jane was still struggling with this issue:

> My mother had to give up nursing when she got married. She had four kids, was extremely active. Occasionally, my father would forbid her. I can't imagine myself getting that wrapped up in volunteer work and church . . . . The women I admired as I was growing up were not working women. I admired their fantastic home lives. But I don't see us having four to five children. With one or two, it's more complex. Your work is not just raising children!

In contrast, by age 34, Jane had, with apparent relief, given up her interest in nursing and had immersed herself in the tasks of caring for her husband and newborn daughter. She was anticipating at least five years passing before she might again be interested in making a career a more integral part of her life structure.

Data from interviews with Jenny H. and from the follow-up interview with Karen A. continued to support the premise that when a woman fails to form a Dream by her early twenties and is preoccupied with separating from her family of origin, substantial difficulties in forming an early adult life structure may result.

In summary, the data at this stage of the analysis supported the importance, for women, of forming a Dream by their early twenties which can become the basis for building a provisional life structure during the twenties. In the reassessment of the life structure around age 30, a woman also has an opportunity to either reassess her Dream or to form an initial Dream in order to form a basis for a new life structure in the thirties.

The Quality of Significant Relationships Formed during the Twenties

The data continued to support the premise that the quality of relationships sought and formed during the twenties is consistent with other elements of the provisional life structure, particularly the quality and content of Dream formation. Data from interviews with Jenny H. provided an additional example of a woman, like Karen A., who formed a relationship with a Special Man around age 20 in order to facilitate her attempts to separate from her mother. In the following description of her husband and his family, one can observe the extent to which Jenny actually continued to perceive herself as a child after her marriage:

> I thought he was nice, stable, thought he would be controlling. I wanted someone to care for me and take care of me. . . . I met his mother. She was the most loving, kind person I've ever met in my life. P. jokes, even to this day, that I married him for his mother, not his money. I guess, in some sense, she was the mother I that I wanted.

Data from the follow-up interviews with Jane Z. and Karen A. failed to shed any additional light on the quality of relationships these women formed during their twenties.

In summary, the data at this stage of the analysis suggested the following: To the extent that a woman forms a Dream and a provisional life structure based on being a single woman and/or forming a career, she tends to form or, at least, seek a relationship during her twenties with someone who serves as a model or, using Levinson's term, Mentor. To the extent that a woman forms a Dream and a provisional life structure based on marriage and motherhood,

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she tends to form or, at least, seek a relationship with a Special Man who can create a world with her in which she can live out her Dream. For women who fail to form a Dream or form an overly-restrictive Dream, this appears to limit the extent to which a mature, intimate, adult relationship can develop in the twenties and be sustained through the thirties.

Implications for Further Subject Choice

The question that was posed prior to interviewing subjects #5 and #6 remained: Does the reported increase in dissatisfaction with the twenties' life structure around age 30 and the subsequent major shift in priorities reflect an intrinsic developmental process or relate to the fact that this sample of women had not formed satisfactory provisional life structures in their twenties? Would this finding also hold up in cases where a woman was relatively satisfied with her life by age 30?

I decided that the type of woman most likely to have formed a relatively satisfactory life structure by the time she was 30 in this society (and therefore least likely to go through a period of change at that age unless an intrinsic developmental process was operative) was the "typical American housewife." In order to avoid the problem that resulted from selecting Patricia R. and Elaine G., where current status was neither sufficient evidence of satisfaction nor of stability, the criteria for subject #8 were as follows: a housewife and mother who had no major conflicting commitments to extra-familial activities, who had sustained a primary commitment to her marriage and family throughout her twenties and thirties, who

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reported satisfaction with her life throughout this period, and who was willing to be interviewed but did not seem "overly enthusiastic." This latter criterion was based on a sense that perhaps some previous subjects had displayed, in their eagerness to participate, a need to have their life choices confirmed, and that this need indicated a latent dissatisfaction with their lives which subsequently interfered with their willingness to discuss their lives openly (i.e., Laura Y., Patricia R., Elaine G.).

Since there was some evidence that the subjects who were from working-class families without benefit of college education tended to exhibit greater difficulty in forming an early adult life structure than did subjects from middle and upper-middle class families who did attend college, it was decided to interview an additional subject who met the above stated criteria for subject #8, but, in contrast, was from a working-class family without college experience.

CHAPTER VII

STAGE FIVE: ENRICHING THE THEORY -- THE EVOLUTION OF THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE THROUGH FOUR DEVELOPMENTAL PERIODS

Factors in Selecting and Interviewing Subjects #8 and #9

Joan B. (S#8) was a 37-year-old wife of an art historian and mother of two children. Three interviews were held with her at her home within a 3-week period. Betty A. (S#9) was a 39-year-old wife of a postal clerk and mother of two children. Two interviews were held with her at her home within a 3-week period. During the course of the interviews with Betty A., it was recognized that the selection of a working-class subject was not indicated at this stage of the data analysis. While it certainly would be interesting to investigate the differences between how working-class and middle-class women form an early adult life structure, this issue had not specifically emerged from the data analysis as the criterion for selecting additional subjects. As in the case of Jenny H., the data obtained from Betty A. could only add examples to previously confirmed elements of the emerging theory. They could not be used to elaborate or modify the theory and, to this extent, were repetitive.

Findings Following the Data Analysis of Subjects #1 through #9

The data from Joan B. confirmed the major findings stated in the previous chapter and suggested certain elaborations of the theory. The data supported the premise that a developmental period exists around age 30 which serves as an opportunity to reassess the provisional life structure of the twenties, even when a woman feels basically satisfied with her life by that age. Data from Joan B. further suggested that a woman may use the period around age 30 to confirm and build on previous commitments in anticipation of forming a new life structure in her early to mid-thirties.

Joan's plan was to go to college, work, and then get married, at various points before having children. To be the kind of person her mother was -- someone who could get so much enjoyment from a family and other people -- always seemed to Joan what was most important in life. When she married an art historian one year her senior at the age of 24, her Dream became more elaborated and included the fact that a whole new world of visual and intellectual experience was now available to her.

Over the course of the next six years, Joan devoted herself to supporting her husband's career and raising their two children, born when she was 26 and 29, respectively. The couple moved to various cities as seemed beneficial to his career development, and it was usually Joan who suggested the moves, even though she disliked the process, when it seemed to her that her husband was dissatisfied professionally. By the time she turned 30, both husband and wife longed for a greater sense of permanence and stability:

> After a couple of years, it seemed that, even though art history was very important to him, he felt that he was getting no relief from it. His department was too high speed; the momentum was just going to follow him through whether he wanted it to, or not. We also felt separate politically . . . . We knew that we wanted to make a more permanent commitment . . . to stay in a place a little bit longer than we had.

When Joan was 31, the family moved back to the university community where she and her husband had met and had already established a network of friends. This move, and the feelings that motivated it, signified the beginning of the reassessment of her twenties' life structure. Following the move, Joan reported an increase in tension between herself and her husband as he faced the difficulties of establishing himself professionally and had less time for her and the children, rather than increased time as she had hoped:

> During the first year we lived down here and P. commuted, it had no advantages for me and only a few for him. He could be totally irresponsible, but he didn't like being away or the way everything piled up on the weekends so that all of us wanted attention. . . . I was feeling that we couldn't go on that way . . . . When he stopped that kind of commuting, we were beginning to see things more in the same light. He was coming around to see it would be to both of our advantages to share things more evenly.

By the end of the second year following the family's move, Joan felt that the situation had improved significantly. Her husband had established himself professionally and was more willing to share household and parenting responsibilities as well as leisure activities. By the time she was 32, Joan felt re-committed to their relationship on a more intimate and egalitarian basis. In addition, she felt permanently settled into a community, and had maintained a stable life structure for the five years prior to being interviewed. Since their move, Joan reported a gradually increasing desire to have an identity beyond her established roles of wife and mother. At age 37, she was anticipating beginning part-time work within the next year:

> Probably within a year after we moved here, I began to resent being "the art historian's wife" . . . . When

> the kids were younger and before we got married, I knew I'd go back to work sometime, but it didn't occur to me that it would have something to do with a sense of identity, whereas now it does.

In summary, the data from Joan B. suggested that for women who have made early, sustained commitments to being wives and mothers, and who are relatively satisfied with their lives by the time they reach 30, the process of reassessing the life structure does not necessarily involve a dramatic shift in priorities. Rather, the data indicated that for these women, a move towards a less dependent, more egalitarian relationship with their husbands may occur at this time, which sets the stage for a process of expansion beyond the roles of wife and mother in the thirties.

In summary, the data analysis following nine subjects generally supported Levinson's four-stage conception of the formation of the early adult life structure while suggesting certain modifications for women. Like men, the data suggested that women make a separation from their families of origin and form a Dream around age 20, form an initial adult life structure in their twenties, have an opportunity to reassess the life structure around age 30, and form a new life structure in their thirties. However, while Levinson states that, for men, the underlying task of the thirties' life structure is to "settle for a few, key choices and create a broader structure around them" (Levinson et al., Note 1), the data from this study suggested that for women, the quality of the life structure formed in the thirties may be dependent on the choices upon which the twenties life structure is based. Specifically, when a woman pursued a career and/or remained single during her twenties, the data supported Levinson's premise that a move towards a more integrated and stable life structure takes place around age 30 -- typically expressed in terms of attempting to establish a satisfactory home and family life. However, for women who made early commitments to marriage and motherhood, the data suggested that a new life structure may be formed in the thirties with some of the exploratory quality that Levinson attributes to the twenties' life structure. In cases where a woman is relatively satisfied with the home life she has established in her twenties, like Joan B., the exploration of alternatives beyond her familial commitments during the thirties may take place within a continued stable context. For other women who experience significant dissatisfaction with their home lives by the time they approach age 30 (e.g., Karen A., Patricia R., Jenny H., and Betty A.), an agonizing choice may be required between continued stability and further personal growth.

Thus, the data suggested that while women's early adult life structure evolves through four developmental periods like their male counterparts, the developmental tasks of exploring alternatives and making relatively permanent commitments may characterize either the twenties' or thirties' life structure, suggesting that women may show greater variability in terms of the ordering of task accomplishment than Levinson suggests is the case for men.

The data, then, appeared to offer some contradictory evidence to Levinson's contention that the order of his developmental periods is fixed, and that one cannot successfully accomplish the tasks of one period without having adequately dealt with the tasks of earlier periods. The data, in fact, suggested that while the order of certain tasks did appear invariant -- specifically, forming a Dream and

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making a separation from the family of origin before forming an initial adult life structure is possible -- the order of other developmental tasks, such as those described above, might be less fixed, at least in so far as women's development is concerned.

The relatively fixed order of separating from the family of origin and forming a Dream has been previously discussed using Karen A. and Jenny H. as examples of women who failed to achieve adequate separations from their mothers around age 20 and re-attempted this task around age 30. Betty A. (S#9) was another example of a woman who had married around age 20 in order to facilitate her separation from her mother, failed to form a viable Dream at this time, and around age 30, following the death of her mother, began to attempt to form an idea of what she wanted as an adult for the first time in her life:

> I think, after the age of 30 I was grown up, and whatever I did now was on my own. You don't go for help after 30, you do it -- you have to do it yourself . . . . I had the feeling: If I were ever left all alone, would I be able to cope with it myself? . . . I also had the feeling: Was I content with everything I had?
>
> I remember sitting watching the soap operas -- my kids would be in taking their naps, my house would be spic and span . . . . All of a sudden I wasn't content. I wanted to go places. I was bored -- sick and tired of staying home watching their "world turn" and mine wasn't!

The Quality of Dream Formation in the Early Twenties

In the previous chapter, some implications of failing to form a viable Dream around age 20, or of forming an overly-restrictive Dream, were discussed in relation to the reassessment of the life structure around age 30. Data from Joan B. suggested that when an

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initial Dream is flexible enough to be modified or elaborated over the course of the twenties, a relatively smooth transition around age 30 may result. While Joan's initial Dream was based on a strong, positive identification with her mother, her Dream was elaborated, first in relation to the specific potentials for development that she anticipated through her relationship with her husband, and a second time, when she recognized a few years after her marriage that aspects of her Dream might be unrealistic:

> As I became more interested in art history, I began to feel how nice it was to have friends who were so interesting to be with. . . . It still is . . . . I still ask myself: What other group of people would I be more interested in being with?
>
> When I first married P. I wanted him to become a world-famous art historian. Then I thought: "What a child you were, how naive" . . . . If he were terribly successful, I know we'd never see him. He'd stop playing the guitar which he does every day, and that wouldn't be so good, either, so I'm willing to make the concessions.

Joan's Dream, like the Dreams previously reported by Laura Y. and Patricia R., was labeled a relational Dream for purpose of further discussion, because the primary elements of the Dream involved forming relationships with other people, most typically through marriage and motherhood. In contrast, the Dreams reported by Jane Z., Merrill K., Elaine G., and by the majority of men in Levinson's sample were labeled individualistic, since the primary elements of these Dreams involved becoming a certain kind of individual, most typically through forming a career identity. The two terms were borrowed from Chodorow, who uses them to describe what she believes to be universal differences between men and women (1974). As previously indicated, the data from this study suggested that women may have difficulty in sustaining an individualistic Dream, and, in fact, such Dreams may actually mask strong needs to make marriage and family an integral, if not primary, element in the early adult life structure.

The Quality of Relationships Formed in the Early Twenties

The data at this stage of the analysis continued to confirm previously stated findings concerning the quality of significant relationships formed during the early twenties. Data from Joan B. confirmed that when a woman forms a primarily relational Dream, she tends to seek a relationship with a Special Man who can facilitate the process of forming a provisional life structure in the twenties by creating with her a world in which she can become a certain kind of wife and mother. Furthermore, the data continued to suggest that rather than seeking a Mentor, a woman with traditionally female aspirations appears to model herself after her mother, and secondarily after other women in her family of origin. Joan B. expresses this important distinction between the relationships with her husband and mother in the following quotation:

> It was my husband's interests that I'm taken by and him as a person. I wouldn't have wanted to go without the music and the visual experience that are part of our lives; but the people whose personalities I want to be like are in my mother's family.

Data from Betty A. supported previously stated findings which indicated that when a woman is experiencing more than average difficulty in separating from her family of origin around age 20, a relationship formed at this time may primarily serve to facilitate the separation, while, in fact, masking the strong child-parent dependency bond that continues to exist. This interpretation is supported in the following statement made by Betty A.:

> I met my husband at 19. . . . I was getting to be an old maid . . . . We went out that night and we've been going out ever since . . . . We kind of fell in together . . . . On the honeymoon I got sick; the whole thing was very scary. I was away from home . . . . When we were looking for this house I found myself saying: "I wish my mother were here to help us make the decision."

Implications for Further Subject Choice

At this stage of the data analysis, all but two subjects reported moderate to severe dissatisfaction with their lives as they approached 30, and subsequently made fairly dramatic changes in their life structures. Elaine G. and Joan B. were the only two women who reported minimal dissatisfaction, and who used the period around age 30 as an opportunity to build on the life structures they had formed in their twenties. What distinguished these two women from the other seven subjects was that they had both formed provisional life structures based solely on either a relational or an individualistic Dream, and did not attempt to integrate major changes into their lives at this time. Elaine G. had established a successful career but did not seem concerned about becoming a wife or mother; Joan B. had a satisfactory marriage and family life but did not express any interest at that time in beginning a career.

The question that was raised by the data at this stage of the analysis was as follows: Was satisfaction with the life structure around 30 proportionate to the degree to which a woman felt she had established a satisfactory home and family life by that age?

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Elaine G. presented an exception to this interpretation, but her reported lack of conflict around age 30 was questionable, due to her generally defensive attitude during the interviews. The decision was made to interview one additional subject who had made a primary, sustained commitment to a career throughout her twenties and thirties.

It was recognized at this point in the data analysis that the previous selection of two subjects at each stage was contra-indicated by the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. The wish for "more data", in fact, revealed a certain degree of scepticism that this unconventional method would produce valid data -- and had resulted, at times, in overwhelming amounts of data for which no previous categories of analysis had been developed.

If this additional subject still reported dissatisfaction around age 30 proportionate to the degree to which she had established a satisfactory home life, this would further support the importance for women of coming to some resolution concerning the issues of marriage and motherhood by their early thirties.

CHAPTER VIII

STAGE SIX: ENRICHING THE THEORY -- THE IMPORTANCE FOR WOMEN OF ESTABLISHING A SATISFACTORY HOME AND FAMILY LIFE BY THE EARLY THIRTIES

Factors in Selecting and Interviewing S#10

Julie D. (S#10), a 35-year-old music historian, was selected by the procedure outlined in Chapter II. Four interviews were held alternately at her home and office within a 4-week period.

Findings Following the Data Analysis of 10 Subjects

The data obtained from the interviews with Julie D. supported the findings presented in the previous chapter, and confirmed the importance for women of establishing a satisfactory home and family life by their early thirties, even where a sustained commitment to a career had been made.

During her attendance at a college which stressed individual, creative achievement, Julie developed the Dream of becoming a great composer. While professors supported her ambition, they were mostly of the opinion that fulfilling her Dream precluded marriage and motherhood. Although she had no wish to marry immediately, Julie knew that she was not willing to make this sacrifice ultimately for the sake of her music, and, as a result, experienced tremendous conflict in attempting to realize her Dream.

Following college, she attended graduate school in a combined program of fine arts and history, and, the following year, took a position as a music historian which was related to, but did not completely fulfill her Dream. This same year, at age 23 she became involved in a relationship with a man who shared her interests in music and from whom she felt she gained a new perspective on her own work. While she continued to date other men, by the time she was 26 Julie had firmly decided that she wanted to marry him. In response to his ambivalence, she began intensive psychotherapy which lasted for almost four years.

The year she turned 28, her lover agreed to marriage, and the couple moved to a nearby city where his political activities and career were already established. Julie had, herself, established a successful career by this time and was unwilling to give it or the therapy up. A temporary compromise was reached:

> I needed the company of other composers. I felt very cut off when we first came here . . . . I decided to stay in New York two nights a week and keep my job and stay in therapy . . . . It was a great strain on the marriage, but we were both too busy to think about it.

The year Julie turned 30, a high status position in her field became available in the city where she and her husband had settled. She accepted the position, although feeling that it meant at least temporarily giving up the Dream of becoming a serious composer, in order to allow herself to better integrate her career with her marriage. Upon accepting the new position, she also began to attempt to become pregnant.

The birth of her first child at age 32 was described by Julie as an event which changed her whole perspective on her career and on her life:

> I feel like having kids is the most interesting thing I've ever done. It's the most ordinary thing, in the sense that the experience is universal . . . . Before, being a professional, college-educated -- that put me in a category . . . . Now, I feel more connected to the human race.

The same year her first daughter was born, Julie and her husband bought a three-family house which was convenient to both their places of employment, and asked some friends to live there with them. For the past three years, Julie reported feeling settled into a stable life structure which seemed to be primarily built around a core commitment to the cooperative household; her husband and two children; and a strong, if secondary commitment to her career. She stated that she had still not decided how or whether to begin composing again, and was not sure that she would ever resolve the issue satisfactorily, even though her husband was supportive of her, as yet, unrealized Dream.

In summary, the data at this stage of the analysis confirmed the previously stated four-stage conception of the formation of the early adult life structure in women. In Julie's case, a conflicted Dream around age 20 formed the basis for the establishment of a provisional life structure in her twenties during which time she attempted to form a career which was closely related to her Dream while simultaneously exploring a relationship with a man which she hoped ultimately would lead to marriage. In her late twenties, she began to feel increasing urgency about getting married. This feeling signified the end of the provisional life structure and the beginning of a transitional period of development. From age 27 through 32, she attempted to integrate marriage and motherhood into her life structure, while also working to find a place for her career and her, as yet, unrealized Dream. By age 32, she had committed herself to a life structure which involved temporarily sacrificing the initial Dream for a stable marriage and family life and a satisfying and prestigious position in her field. In answer to the question raised in the previous chapter concerning whether the establishment of a satisfactory home and family life by the early thirties is important for a woman who has also made a sustained commitment to a career, the data from Julie D. suggested that this was the case.

The data further suggested that the realization of an individualistic Dream may be extremely difficult for a woman, especially when the Dream is in direct conflict with internalized values from her family of origin. This interpretation is confirmed in the following statement by Julie D.:

> My parents are Greek Orthodox. That's another part of me. I was one of the few without a planned marriage . . . . In college, my music professor would ask: "Are you going to get married?" and I'd say, "yes." He'd say, "You can never become a composer, it has to mean everything" . . . . Becoming a composer would have been a total rejection of this background I've come from.

When Julie described that having a child made her feel "more connected cross-class, cross-culturally -- another woman and her kid," it was interesting to speculate that, at least unconsciously, she was responding to a sense of feeling more connected to her family of origin and her ethnic heritage.

The data at this stage of the analysis supported the previously stated premise that the functions served by relationships that women form in their twenties are related to the extent to which their Dreams are individualistic or relational. Data from Julie D. indicated that when both individualistic and relational goals are important to a woman, a relationship formed during the twenties may incorporate some of the functions of a Mentor as well as a Special Man. In the following statement, Julie describes her initial attraction to her husband as involving a capacity to learn from him about her own work; an important role attributed by Levinson to the Mentor:

> The reason I was attracted to my husband was because I was always interesting to guys I went out with, because I knew something about modern music. I wanted the man to know something, too. It was nice to be with him because his vision was so interesting . . . . I would ask him to come to concerts and he would come and hear things that I didn't hear and it was really very nice. He was different in that way from other people I had been with.

Implications for Further Subject Choice

The data from Julie D. confirmed the importance for many career-oriented women of establishing a satisfactory home and family life during the period around age 30 before forming a new life structure in their thirties. However, in view of the fact that Julie's career was a compromise choice between her Dream of becoming a composer and her desire for marriage and children, an additional subject was selected who had made a relatively unconflicted career choice, had sustained it, and who, by her mid-thirties, was still committed to career advancement and considered her career a central priority. If this additional subject still reported a need for integrating elements of a home and family life into her life structure during the transitional period around age 30, this would further confirm the importance of a woman accomplishing this developmental task by this particular stage of life.

Due to the limited nature of the question raised by the data, it was not deemed necessary to begin a new stage of data analysis at this time.

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Factors in Selecting and Interviewing Subject #11

Roberta S. (S#11) was recommended by a friend as a highly successful professional who held a tenured faculty position in a highly competitive, elite university. She agreed to participate in the study on the condition that she limit her involvement to one interview. Because the scope of the question raised at this stage of the data analysis was limited, contracting with her for one interview seemed reasonable. In the course of interviewing Roberta, it was discovered that she had been raised in England rather than in the United States, which had been the case for all previous subjects. However, since her data were so consistent with other members of the sample, it was not felt that this aspect of her background warranted eliminating her from the study.

Findings Following the Data Analysis of 11 Subjects

The data obtained from Roberta S. supported the findings summarized previously. Furthermore, the data supported the conception of the period around age 30 as a time when women feel increased urgency to establish a satisfactory home life if this task has not been accomplished during the twenties. When a woman has, in addition, a strong commitment to building a career, such as was the case for Roberta S., the data supported the need for integration of these potentially conflicting components of the life structure beginning at this time.

Roberta S. was almost 40 at the time of the interview with her.

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She described having a Dream by the time she graduated from undergraduate school at age 22 which was extremely vague and also, she believed, representative of career-oriented women of her generation:

> There was an expectation that you would get married, hope that you would, and therefore there was a lot of flexibility built into women's careers because you knew whatever you chose it might not be a permanent thing . . . . There was no clear sense of career in terms of life patterns -- moving ahead in a professional way. There was a sense of a job, or having interesting things to do, but not seeing how one's life might unravel in professional terms over a 20 or 30 year period . . . . I guess my own feelings weren't very precise. I had some image of the kind of person I wanted to be at 40: fairly content, self-contained, not the neurotic undergraduate I was then.

Immediately following her undergraduate work, Roberta was accepted into a highly specialized training program in administering legal services. At age 23, she met her husband-to-be. Two years later, she married him and was simultaneously promoted to a high status government position in her field. With marriage, however, she gave up this position to join her husband in the United States where he was already developing his career as a hospital administrator. She worked for a brief time, and then decided to return to school to obtain an additional American graduate degree. Re-enrolling in graduate school followed shortly after Roberta's decision to give up her successful administrative career in exchange for an academic career which she anticipated would be less difficult to integrate with raising children. When she was 27, the couple discovered that they could not have children of their own, and immediately began proceedings for adoption. This process successfully culminated in her adopting two infants when Roberta was 29 and 31½ respectively. Although she had adapted her career to what she thought would be the demands of early motherhood, Roberta described the years from age 29 through 34 as difficult ones:

> I worked full-time through all of this, and I'm not sure I would do that again. At the time it seemed like the best thing to do since I was moving myself into professional life . . . . Being a mother had a tremendous impact in terms of energy . . . and a certain amount of guilt because you wonder whether this is really the best thing for the children.

By her mid-thirties, with the children beginning school full-time and Roberta stabilized in a successful academic position, she described a sense of things "plateauing." The family settled into a routine which allowed maximum attention to parenting and also allowed Roberta to satisfy her professional responsibilities. She currently described being highly contented with this pattern, which had been maintained for almost five years.

In terms of Dream formation, Roberta clearly described a Dream which incorporated both strong individualistic and relational components, and was flexible enough to allow for an integration of both priorities in the period around age 30 without necessitating sacrificing either.

Data from Roberta also confirmed the premise that a woman's husband may serve some of the functions of a Mentor as well as a Special Man, in cases where she has both individual and relational ambitions:

> The single biggest influence was my husband, who has always been consistently supportive, who encouraged me at a time when I would have possibly given up . . . . His own interests are very close to mine, so we've been excellent friends and colleagues . . . . Without that insisting, I wouldn't have done what I've done.

In addition to describing the importance of her husband's support of her developing career, Roberta also described the difficulty for a

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career-oriented woman who might seek a Mentor, of finding one of her own sex:

> There were few women role models who one would aspire to be like, because the people who taught us were single or drab. They didn't lead integrated professional and family lives. I came out of a background where my mother and most of the mothers I knew did not work. I always had tremendous admiration for people's work, but not for the lives they were leading.

At this point in the data analysis, it was felt that a relatively coherent picture of the formation of the early adult life structure in women had emerged, and that no further data collection was indicated.

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PART THREE

CONTRIBUTIONS TO A THEORY OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT IN WOMEN

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CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE FORMATION OF THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE IN WOMEN

This study involved a systematic investigation of the process of forming an early adult life structure in women. The concept of the individual life structure, and its evolution through a series of relatively universal, age-linked, adult developmental periods, has been recently proposed by Levinson and associates. The results of Levinson's extensive 9-year investigation of 40 men between the ages of 35 and 45 from four occupational categories will be available in the author's book, Seasons of a Man's Life, due for publication in 1977 by Alfred A. Knopf. For purposes of the present study, references to Levinson's work have been drawn from three sources: "The Psychosocial Development of Men in Early Adulthood and the Mid-life Transition" (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee, 1974); an early draft of the author's book, Seasons of a Man's Life; and ongoing consultations with Daniel Levinson.

The findings support the basic applicability of Levinson's theory of adult development in describing the period from approximately age 18 through the mid-thirties for women. However, it would appear that women, in this society at least, display greater variability, both in the order in which they accomplish specific developmental tasks, and in the difficulties they face in forming a satisfactory early adult life structure as compared with men. Thus, questions are raised about the need for elaboration and modification of certain aspects of

Levinson's theory if it is to accurately describe women's development as well as men's. Specific areas in which women appear to vary among each other and in comparison with men are as follows: the quality of the Dream formed in the early twenties, the quality and function of significant relationships formed in the twenties, the degree to which the twenties' life structure is provisional, and the extent to which a new, exploratory life structure or a more stable and integrated life structure is formed in the thirties. These proposed differences will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

As Levinson contends, women's development from approximately age 18 through the mid-thirties proceeds through a series of four age-related, psychosocial developmental periods in which various tasks come into primacy and then are gradually replaced by other tasks. However, while Levinson states that the developmental tasks of one period cannot be successfully accomplished until the tasks of earlier periods of development have been sufficiently resolved, women appear to demonstrate greater variability in terms of the ordering of task accomplishment in the twenties and thirties than Levinson suggests is the case for men. On the other hand, the accomplishment of other developmental tasks, such as making a sepration from the family of origin and forming a Dream, would appear to be prerequisites to the subsequent formation of an initial adult life structure in the twenties for both men and women.

The four periods of development which emerged as being fairly consistent with Levinson's schema are as follows: the Transition Into Early Adulthood, Getting Into the Adult World the Age Thirty Transition, and the beginning of Settling Down.

Transition Into Early Adulthood (TIEA)

This is a transitional period in which the primary developmental tasks for women appear to be identical to what Levinson describes for men: separating from the family of origin, beginning to form a Dream, beginning to define oneself as an adult within the adult world, and beginning to change the dependence/independence balance by forming relationships with adults as adults.

For the 11 women in this study, TIEA began at an average age of 18 with minimal differences among subjects. The average duration of the period was 4 years. These findings are essentially identical with Levinson's (Levinson et al., Note 1). The period typically began with a woman's sense of wanting to become more independent from her family of origin and ended with the establishment of a new home base. The onset of the period was typically marked by going away to college for the eight women who attended college, and taking a first job for the three women who did not attend college.

The formation of a Dream is a critical indication that a differentiation from the family of origin is beginning to take place. As Levinson describes, the Dream functions as a transitional phenomenon which indicates that the young person is beginning to conceive of the possibility of being an adult within the adult world. Where a woman does not form a Dream by this age (around 20) which she can begin to make part of her life in the next decade, there would appear to be more than average difficulties in the separation process from the family of origin. Although this study was not focused on

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obtaining in-depth material from childhood and adolescence, there was some indication that women who did not form a Dream around age 20 had experienced greater personal deprivation during childhood than did women who were able to form a Dream and build a life structure on the basis of this Dream during their twenties. Types of childhood deprivation described were: separation from parental figures due to parental estrangement, divorce or death; physically-abusive parents; continual change of households; and multiple moves. These women also described having felt unsupported by their parents, and had greater difficulty in separating from them.

It would seem that a Dream formed during the Transition Into Early Adulthood may be flawed, in that it limits the process of exploration and growth in the subsequent decade. Where this is the case, a woman's Dream appears to be overly involved with attempts to comply with or defy perceived parental expectations. In this respect, the study supports Levinson's contention that the Dream must be broad enough to allow for adaptation, but also present a somewhat consistent picture to the young person of what he or she is in the process of becoming as an adult.

There appears to be a significant difference in terms of certain aspects of Dream formation between men and women. The Dreams that women form tend to have a strong relational component; that is, becoming involved in a relationship, typically expressed in terms of wanting to get married and have a family. In contrast, the Dreams reported by most men in Levinson's sample who formed Dreams tended to be more individualistic; that is, becoming a certain kind of individual, most often expressed in terms of wanting to form an occupation

(Levinson et al., Note 1). The difficulty women face both in forming a Dream with strong individualistic components and in putting such a Dream into their lives in their twenties and thirties will be discussed further in Chapter X.

Getting Into the Adult World (GIAW)

Levinson describes the primary task of this period as fashioning a provisional life structure which provides a viable link between the valued self and the wider adult world. For women, this process involves: forming a new home base away from the family of origin; forming an initial balance between exploration and commitment, but with perhaps a greater emphasis on commitment in cases where a woman creates a family during this period than is true for the men in Levinson's sample; finding ways of living out the Dream and other parts of the self; and forming relationships with men and women which facilitate the process of forming this initial adult life structure. In this study, the period typically began with a move to establish a new home outside the family of origin and typically ended with the onset of increasing feelings of dissatisfaction with the life structure.

Getting Into the Adult World began at an average age of 22 for the women in this study, with a minimal range from ages 21 - 23. These findings are essentially identical with Levinson (Levinson et al., Note 1). While there were minimal differences in the age of onset, there were striking differences among subjects in the duration of the period. For subjects who married and had their children during this period, the duration of GIAW was on the average of 2.3 years longer than it was for women who did not marry or have children at this time.

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While the average age of termination of the period (age 28) was identical to Levinson's findings for men (Levinson et al., Note 1), Levinson does not report the extent of variability among men from different occupational categories as was found in the present study between women who marry and have children during their twenties and those who don't. While these figures can in no way be interpretated as statistically significant, they are consistent with a suggestion from the data that GIAW may be intrinsically less provisional and exploratory for women who establish families during their twenties than it is for those women who postpone these decisions until around age 30, or for the majority of men. For the former group who become wives and mothers during their twenties, it appears more likely that a relatively stable, distinct life structure is formed during GIAW which is reassessed around age 30 in anticipation of a second life structure being formed in the thirties. This second life structure, as well as perhaps involving greater stability and permanent commitments, may, to some extent, be more exploratory than the earlier life structure. This issue will be discussed further in the section on Settling Down.

Whether a woman attempts to live out a relational or an individualistic Dream during GIAW also appears to affect the quality and function of significant relationships that she seeks during her twenties. For men, Levinson describes the significance of the Mentor and the Special Woman in facilitating the formation of an initial life structure in the twenties. When a woman's GIAW life structure is formed primarily around the goals of remaining single (at least for that period of time) and/or forming an occupation, women, like their male counterparts, do, in fact, seek a relationship with a man or a woman whom they admire and feel they can "learn from" and who supports their individualistic Dream by serving as a model for its realization. The formation of a Mentor relationship does not appear to be significant, however, in cases where a woman attempts to form a life structure during GIAW which is centered around becoming a wife and mother. For these women, a relationship appears to be sought with a Special Man who supports the relational Dream by creating a world, and perhaps serving as a guide through it, in which a certain kind of home and family life can be created. The modelling function, in contrast, appears to be retained by the mother, and secondarily by other women in the family of origin.

When a woman attempts to form a life structure during GIAW which combines individualistic and relational components, it would appear that a relationship is sought with a Special Man who also can serve as a Mentor for her individualistic aspirations. The problems for women in this society in forming satisfactory Mentor relationships will be discussed further in Chapter X.

Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

Levinson describes this period as a transitional stage between the exploratory, provisional choices of the twenties, and the demands for greater stability and integration of the life structure in the thirties:

> ATT is an opportunity to work on the flaws and limitations in the late GIAW life structure, and to create the basis for a new, more satisfactory structure with which to start Settling Down. One has some four to five years in which to question and reappraise the GIAW life structure and to ask: What have I done with my life? What do I want to make of it? What new directions shall I choose? (Levinson et al., Note 1).

To the extent that ATT is viewed as a transitional period between an initial life structure formed in the twenties (whether provisional,

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or stable in its own right) and a second life structure formed in the thirties (whether more stable and integrated than the first, or more exploratory in some respects), this general conception of the period appears to be applicable for women as well as for men. ATT typically began at age 28 for women in this study, although, as stated previously, there was marked variability in the age of onset (from age 25½ to 30) which tended to be associated with a woman's familial status in her late twenties: Unmarried women without children reported a desire to make changes in their twenties life structure earlier than married women with children.

For women as well as men, the onset of ATT is generally signalled by increasing feelings of dissatisfaction with the twenties' life structure, and/or a need to better integrate disparate or as yet unrealized aspects of the self. The period typically ends when the need to make changes in the life structure becomes less immediate, and a woman can anticipate a period of relative stability beginning in her life. There was wide variation in the age of termination of ATT in this study. In fact, three subjects at ages 31½, 33 and 35 had not yet completed ATT at the time of the interviews with them (Merrill K., Karen A. and Jenny H.). This finding supports other findings which suggest that women have marked difficulty forming a satisfactory life structure in their thirties. Explanations for this finding will be proposed in Chapter X.

For women, dissatisfaction with the life structure during ATT appears to be related to the extent to which a satisfactory home and family life have already been established. While Levinson discusses the importance for bachelors of coming to terms with the issue of marriage

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during ATT, there is no evidence that marriage for a man around age 30 results in the dramatic reordering of priorities of the life structure as would seem to be the case for women.

For women who have not married or had children by their late twenties, an increased sense of urgency to do so is experienced around age 30. Particularly for women who begin ATT with an immediate desire to find a husband, it would appear to require at least 4-5 years to fully integrate a satisfactory marriage and family life as a basis for a new life structure in the thirties.

Women who marry and have children during GIAW face somewhat different conflicts during ATT. Wives and mothers experience an increase in marital dissatisfaction at this time which is associated with a need to become less dependent on their husbands and to form a more egalitarian relationship with them. When a woman is basically satisfied with her marriage at this age, the conflict is usually resolvable, and the transitional period ends with a reaffirmed commitment to the marriage as a basis with which to begin a new life structure in the thirties in which the family remains a central component. However, when a marital relationship is unable to accommodate reassessment during ATT, a woman may have to choose between sacrificing either the stable family life, or further personal growth. In this study, women responded to this dilemma either by obtaining a divorce, or by maintaining the marriage but emotionally withdrawing into extra-familial activities or liaisons.

The quality of ATT can vary tremendously, depending on how satisfactorily the tasks from earlier developmental periods have been accomplished. As Levinson suggests, a smooth transition around age 30 may indicate either that the life structure of the twenties has been well-formed, or that there are such severe flaws that they cannot even be addressed at this time (Levinson et al., Note 1).

Where major changes do occur during ATT, this indicates both the presence of inevitable flaws in the twenties' life structure, and the potential to develop a more satisfactory life structure in the thirties. In this study, for example, women who failed to form a Dream by their early twenties, and who remained primarily dependent on parental figures throughout their twenties, had the opportunity during ATT to do further developmental work on these unresolved tasks of TIEA.

Age 30 crises were also observed in cases where a woman had formed an overly-restrictive Dream and subsequently had failed to integrate important parts of the self during GIAW. Where the Dream had been formed primarily in compliance with or in defiance of parental expectations, an important aspect of the age 30 crisis was the struggle to come to terms with how much a woman wanted her life to be similar to or different from how she perceived her mother's life.

Settling Down (SD)

Levinson describes the underlying tasks of this period as follows: to settle for a few key choices, to create a broader structure around them, to invest oneself as fully as possible in the various components of this structure, and to pursue long-range plans and goals within it. Due to the fact that the majority of women in this sample were in the midst of this developmental period at the time they were interviewed, the data concerning the life structure of the thirties is less complete than they are for earlier developmental periods. Specifically, since

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this study did not examine development beyond the thirties, it is impossible to interpret the data in their appropriate developmental context.

As mentioned previously, the age at the onset of SD varied significantly even within this group of 11 women. One woman had achieved an integration of her life structure by 31-32; another failed to do so by 35. These findings suggest important differences among women at this age and also attest to the difficulty women face in forming a satisfactory life structure in their thirties.

It would appear that the term "Settling Down" may not adequately describe the complexities of this period for women. Where a woman remains single throughout her twenties, ATT clearly does involve an attempt to form the basis for a more stable life structure in the thirties within which more permanent commitments can be made, specifically regarding marriage and family. In contrast, women who make early commitments to marriage and family in their twenties begin to question their desire to continue this total commitment to the family during ATT and form the groundwork for a process of "opening up" in the thirties. This "opening up" process may actually involve the formation of an individualistic Dream and/or the formation of a Mentor relationship, and thus can incorporate developmental tasks which Levinson attributes to GIAW. Possible explanations for the variability in the ordering of task accomplishment in the thirties for women will be proposed in Chapter X.

In summary, women's development parallels men's in the late teens and early twenties, may diverge considerably during the twenties, and by age 30, when members of both sexes have the opportunity to reassess their life structures, women must come to terms with the issues of marriage and parenting in both a quantitatively and qualitatively different way than is the case for men.

CHAPTER X

DISCUSSION

The Findings

The findings of this study concern that aspect of Levinson's theory of the adult life course which deals with the formation of the early adult life structure. For women, like men, one can understand the life structure as evolving through a series of four age-related, developmental periods, beginning at approximately age 18 and continuing through the mid-thirties: the Transition Into Early Adulthood, Getting Into the Adult World, the Age Thirty Transition, and the beginning of Settling Down.

The findings support Levinson's contention that the accomplishment of certain developmental tasks, such as separating from the family of origin and forming a Dream, is a pre-requisite to forming an initial adult life structure in the twenties. However, some modification of Levinson's definition and ordering of the developmental tasks of the twenties and thirties is suggested in order to take into account the apparent greater variability in women's development as compared with men.

The Status of Levinson's Theory of Adult Development

How can we account for the greater variability of women? To answer this question, one must first address an inherent difficulty that was faced in the analysis of the data: the fact that the status of Levinson's conceptualization is that of a work in progress rather than a completed, comprehensive theory. A comprehensive theory of human development must implicitly provide norms for development, as well as describe the process, as does Freud's theory of psychosexual development, and, to a lesser extent, Erikson's theory of ego development. If not, as Levinson himself acknowledges, there is no basis for positing that the sequence of periods is orderly and invariant (Levinson et al., Note 1). Yet Levinson also states: "Our evaluation of task-fulfillment is still crude." His findings, in this respect, can be summarized in the statement: "The life structure is satisfactory to the extent that it is viable in society and suitable for the self" (Levinson et al., Note 1). The fact remains, however, that Levinson is, as yet, incomplete in terms of relating the satisfactoriness of the life structure to the accomplishment of specific developmental tasks -- such as forming a Dream, forming a relationship with a Mentor or a Special Woman -- even as these tasks apply to adult male development.

In certain areas, the findings from this study suggest implications of incomplete task accomplishment, at least in so far as women's development is concerned. For example, women who fail to project a viable sense-of-future-self-in-the-adult-world (a Dream) by their early twenties subsequently experience significant difficulty in forming an early adult life structure.

Erikson (1968) has previously described the state of acute identity confusion which may occur at this stage of life as an inability to resolve the developmental tasks of Identity vs. Identity Confusion:

> A state of acute identity confusion usually becomes manifest at a time when the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous

> commitment to physical intimacy . . . to decisive occupational choice, to energetic competition, and to psychosocial self-definition. (p.166)

Levinson's contribution, in this context, is in postulating that "psychosocial self-definition" in the early twenties demands the formation of a projected sense-of-future-self-in-the-adult-world, as well as the current ability to tentatively commit oneself to one identity as opposed to another.

The importance of forming a Dream as a basis for subsequent psychosocial development is further substantiated in this study by the fact that several women who did not report forming a Dream by their early twenties, appeared to be making attempts to do so in their early thirties. In other cases, women formed overly-restrictive Dreams and subsequently built life structures during G1AW which limited their potential for exploration of an adult identity. This premature commitment to a restricted identity has been previously documented by Erikson in his discussion of identity foreclosure (1968) -- another pathogenic response to the demands of Identity vs. Identity Confusion.

For women who form an overly-restrictive Dream by their early twenties, ATT can be used to make fairly dramatic changes in the life structure, as previously repressed aspects of the self struggle for acknowledgment. The process of attempting to work through unresolved developmental issues from the past in an effort to achieve further growth has been previously documented by Freud and Erikson in their concepts of fixation or regression (Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1924). These concepts, in part, describe the process of change reported around age 30 by women as they attempt to form a more viable Dream than was possible in their early twenties.

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Other Levinsonian developmental tasks take on importance for women only to the extent that they seek to follow a more typically masculine pattern of development. For example, forming a Mentor relationship appears to facilitate the formation of an initial life structure in the twenties for women in cases where occupation outside of the family is an important element. For women who choose to follow a more traditional female pattern of development in their twenties, forming a relationship with a Mentor does not appear to be as significant.

It is at this point that the incomplete status of Levinson's theory presents difficulties when one attempts to interpret the significance of women's variability. Shall we say that all women who do not form an occupation or a Mentor relationship during their twenties have not satisfactorily accomplished the tasks of GIAW?

To the extent that Levinson is providing and articulating societal developmental norms, women who do not complete the developmental tasks he outlines must inevitably view themselves (and be viewed by others) as failing to achieve full adult status. If, in addition, we accept Freud's premise that the little girl of age four recognizes that she will never succeed in life like her brother or father because she lacks a penis, women can be viewed as receiving confirming evidence in adulthood that they are inferior, unless they can succeed by the established norms. The point of this discussion is not to argue with the fact that it is probably inconceivable for a woman in this society to feel that she can succeed as an adult, equal to her male counterparts. Rather, the goal is to raise questions about the narrowness of the standards by which this self-evaluation is based.

It would appear that Levinson's theory, as well as those of Freud

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and Jung, reflects the inherent value that post-industrial western civilization has placed on individualization and achievement as opposed to the development of relationships between the individual and the community of men and women to which he or she is integrally bound and inter-dependent. The most widely acknowledged proponent of the alternate view of man as inseparable from his interpersonal context is Sullivan (1953).

Evidence for this interpretation of Levinson's theory comes from the fact that his treatment of the formation of the early adult life structure is completely consistent with the career development pattern of successful, middle-class American men. Furthermore, Levinson states that his previous extensive research on career development was a major source of interest in his current work on adult development (Levinson et al., Note 1). This leaves the overwhelming majority of women who do not conform to the male career development pattern unaccounted for by the theory, unless they are included as being deviant or abnormal.

Issues in Studying Women's Development

The rapid social change in this country in recent years has made this a particularly challenging time to study women's development. In discussing the findings of this study regarding, for example, the Age-Thirty Transition in women, it is important to recognize that the 11 women in this sample turned 30 between 1966 and 1972 -- probably at the height of the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement in this country. It is certainly possible that the high degree of dissatisfaction and change during ATT reported by the majority of women in this study can be partially accounted for by the societal context in which these changes occurred. For the past 15 years, significant numbers of women have been expressing dissatisfaction with the traditional female pattern and have been attempting to find alternatives more consistent with the traditional male pattern. Yet even women who attempt to follow a male career development pattern in their twenties, feel the need to come to terms with the traditional feminine identity issues of wifehood and motherhood during the Age-Thirty Transition in both a quantitatively and qualitatively different way than is true for men.

The strongest evidence for this interpretation comes from the fact that for all women in the sample who pursued a career during their twenties and subsequently became mothers around age 30, having a child affected the place of their careers in the new life structure formed in the early thirties. The degree of conflict and apparent difficulty women in this sample reported in integrating familial and career components of the life structures is consistent with the widely-held point of view that increased social freedom for women has also resulted in increased internal conflict. As Ruth Moulton has pointed out in her thoughtful analysis of sexual problems of modern women: "The nature of sexual problems has changed more than their frequency . . . . The unconscious of modern woman contains many remnants of the conscious misconceptions of her grandmother" (Moulton, 1973, pp.196-198).

For the purpose of a more thorough analysis of the implications of this study in addressing the difficulties women face in forming a satisfactory early adult life structure, the subjects have been divided into two groups. In Group #1 are those women who followed the traditional female pattern of marriage and motherhood in their twenties. Group #2 includes the remainder of the sample who deviated from the

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traditional female pattern -- either by postponing or repudiating marriage and motherhood, or by forming a serious, sustained career commitment in their twenties. The point of the following discussion is to demonstrate that whether contemporary American women follow a traditional adult female pattern of development, or deviate from that pattern, they face certain difficulties in forming a satisfactory early adult life structure not normally encountered by their male counterparts.

Limitations of Establishing a Traditional Adult Female Life Structure

In terms of Levinson's theory, Group #1 applies to those women who formed a relational Dream centered around marriage and motherhood, established a life structure based on these priorities during GIAW,and formed a relationship with a Special Man-husband who facilitated the realization of their relational Dream. One could view these women as postponing the formation of a provisional life structure, since they are not seeking to define themselves as adults apart from their relationships with husband and children. It would appear, however, that Group #1 women do, in fact, form both a Dream and a relationship during GIAW which facilitates the realization of the Dream except in cases where their individual psychopathology and lack of opportunities prevents this from occurring. The relationship with a Special Man may develop itself over the course of GIAW from a highly dependent relationship based on projections of an idealized paternal figure, to a more truly egalitarian relationship which exhibits the kind of mutuality which Erikson describes as the task of his ego-stage of Intimacy vs. Isolation. Thus, it seems more accurate to view these women as developing an adult female life structure in their twenties while postponing developmental work on a more individualistic (masculine) life structure. This interpretation supports previous writings of Erikson and Bardwick. Erikson's oversentimentalized style detracts from an otherwise valid point of view:

> The stage of life crucial for the emergence of an integrated female identity is the step from youth to maturity, the state when the young woman . . . relinquishes the care received from the parental family in order to commit herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his and her offspring. (Erikson, 1968, p.265)

Bardwick (1971) writes: "The only way to achieve a feminine sense of identity, if one has internalized the general norms, is to succeed in the roles of wife, helpmate, and mother -- and this takes years." (p.189)

A significant finding of this study is the relative unimportance of the Mentor relationship for women who follow a traditional female pattern during their twenties, and the continuing influence of the mother as a model. It would appear that this continuing identification with a parental figure in place of forming a new relationship with a transitional figure outside the family of origin, corresponds with the postponement of the formation of an individualistic life structure in women, and the establishment of a life structure based on relationships with husband and children in the twenties. These findings are consistent with Mead and Chodorow, who argue that the early mother-daughter relationship encourages a prolonged dependency bond and makes the process of differentiation more difficult for girls than it is for boys. Both authors, however, stress the positive influence of this early mother-daughter relationship on women's subsequent emphasis or forming relationships in adult life (Chodorow, 1974; Mead, 1949).

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For women who follow the traditional female pattern, one could question the extent to which Levinson's term, "provisional" accurately applies to the life structure developed in the twenties. While an opportunity to reassess the life structure still occurs around 30, a woman who has made a major commitment to marriage and motherhood in her twenties is to a large extent bound by these choices. One could argue, in fact, that the successful project of bearing and raising children during one's twenties requires the formation of a stable life structure during that decade. The data from this study demonstrate that GIAW lasts longer for women in Group #1 than for either women in Group #2 or for men. Furthermore, the reassessment of the life structure around age 30 would appear to be more accurately conceived of as involving building a second adult life structure,rather than necessarily a more stable or integrated one, although this may be true in some cases.

It would seem that some of the developmental tasks of GIAW are addressed for the first time during the thirties for Group #1 women, such as forming an occupation, forming an individualistic Dream,and seeking a relationship with a Mentor. Thus, while for men, Levinson indicates a progressive integration of an early adult life structure which climaxes in the late thirties, it appears that a traditional female adult life structure may be fully integrated by the late twenties or early thirties. Bardwick alludes to this interpretation when she writes: "Unlike the major occupational role responsibilities of men, the traditional feminine responsibilities increase and decrease with the birth and maturation of children" (Bardwick, 1971, p.188).

For women who have completed their major childbearing and rearing functions by the time they reach 30 (that is, they have reached the middle motherhood stage where their youngest child has begun school full-time), the question emerges: Where do I go from here? Freud was most likely alluding to this problem in his observation, quoted in the first chapter of this study, which suggests that a woman of age 30 is characterized by "psychical rigidity and unchangeability." Had Freud suggested that lack of opportunity rather than inherent, psychic characteristics was responsible for women's apparent stagnation at this age, he might have been credited as a feminist, rather than as the father of modern sexism. With the increased awareness of overpopulation in the last 20 years, it is even more likely today that a woman who begins childbearing by age 20 will have completed the major part of her female role responsibilities by the time she reaches 30. Fortunately for these women, decreasing norms for childbearing have paralleled increasing opportunities to join the work force in their thirties. Thus, we have Bardwick and others describing the "reemergence of achievement motivation" and the "search for a more individual feeling of identity and a feeling of direct participation in the real world" for women in their thirties (Bardwick, 1971 p.146), as well as support for an expansion of women's life structures during this decade in the current study.

In her criticism of Freud's views on femininity, Thompson makes the now generally-accepted point:

> It is well known in psychoanalytic therapy that for successful outcome of treatment an actual opportunity for further development of the person must exist. This consideration would seem to offer an adequate explanation of the greater rigidity of women [noted by Freud] (Thompson, 1942, p.236).

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Thompson's argument has significant implications for the student of adult development, for it implies that the process of forming an early adult life structure has altered for women as increasing opportunities for development beyond the traditional female identity have expanded. Yet the picture is not completely optimistic. Even though a woman may begin a career in her thirties, there are still severe restrictions, both internal and external, on the extent to which she can explore the world beyond the family. Externally, she faces competition with younger women and men in an already overcrowded job market and often lack of support from a husband who may resent competing for her attention. Internally, she may experience conflict between her continuing major responsibilities to her family and her new responsibilities to her employer, and debilitating guilt if she fails. As Levinson states, it is difficult to form a new Dream which can be put into the life structure in the thirties. Where a woman's mother may have provided a "good-enough" model for her own motherhood experiences, and her husband, an important contribution in facilitating these efforts, these major significant figures from the twenties may fail her in her search for an identity outside of the family. The search for available Mentors is difficult enough for women in their early twenties, let alone for a woman in her thirties; yet the formation of exactly this type of relationship may be a critical source of support and indentification if a woman is really to move beyond the familial world. Bardwick describes the opposing sense of expansion and constriction that women in Group #1 may feel during their thirties:

> In some ways the years of the thirties can often be perceived as dependent upon the important decisions, commitments, and responsibilities that were made during the twenties. The woman

> in her thirties is likely to feel that she is going on the momentum of previous decisions and that alternatives, role freedoms, are closing in. There can be conflict if she perceives the reality of her responsibilities and feels she is the sum of her obligations. Simultaneously, in the decade of the thirties she frequently finds that the time-consuming routine demands of the previous decade have declined and the possibility for new commitments, of expansion, are increasing. . . . While, on the one hand, there are new freedoms, on the other hand there can be the fear of freedom as one realizes the restrictions one has evolved as a consequence of previous commitments. (Bardwick, 1971, p.214)

The Problems of Deviating from a Traditional Adult Female Life Structure

Through growing awareness and fear of the restrictions of the traditional female pattern, American women have been increasingly motivated to seek alternatives. It would appear, in fact, that a motive for some women to remain single throughout their twenties is the desire to not become like their mothers, rather than their desire to have a career per se. Bardwick confirms this interpretation in her own study when she states that an ambivalent mother-daughter relationship is often a major component of woman's decision to postpone or forego marriage:

> In my interviews with graduate school students, I find many of them consciously rejecting an identification with their mother's traditional sex role . . . . While they do not really know what they want to do, they do not want to spend their lives as their mothers did. (Bardwick, 1971, p.153)

While the issue of daughters' ambivalent feelings towards their mothers is certainly not a new one, the discovery of increasingly effective contraception, the growing acceptability of premarital sexual relations, and the increasing opportunities for women to achieve advanced education with job training have legitimized these concerns and made the realization of alternative life patterns more realistic. However, it would seem that women who ultimately want marriage and motherhood can only postpone these decisions for so long -- until the Age-Thirty Transition to be precise. The findings from this study support previous writings by Erikson (1968) who raised the issue of the centrality of motherhood in the emerging adult female identity, and attributed it to the presence of a creative "inner space" in women:

> But how does the identity formation of women differ by dint of the fact that their somatic design harbors an "inner space" destined to bear the offspring of chosen men and, with it, a biological, psychological, and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy? Is not the disposition for this commitment (whether it be combined with a career, and even whether or not it be realized in actual motherhood) the core problem of female fidelity? (p.266)

While explanations for the need to come to terms with the issue of motherhood during ATT may exist on a psychosocial level, one cannot ignore biology. A reveiw of recent studies overwhelmingly confirms that complications during pregnancy caused by toxemia, a tendency for premature birth, a protracted course of delivery, operation and perinatal mortality begin to increase dramatically in frequency beginning at age 35 (Greenhill, 1974). While both may require equivalent physical and emotional exertion, the fact remains that a woman is probably more likely to succeed if she begins medical school at 35 than if she begins motherhood at the same age.

It follows, then, that a marriage around age 30 is made under considerable time pressure. While love may be no less a factor than in a marriage made at an earlier age, increasing needs for a stable foundation from which to begin childbearing may result in flawed choice.

What was striking in the current study was the extent to which women in Group #2 often drastically limited or abandoned their career goals after marriage or motherhood. Two explanations come to mind -- not mutually exclusive. The first is that, in their relief at having resolved their ambivalence about identifying with their mothers (at least temporarily), these women plunge themselves into marriage and motherhood with total absorption, as if finally acknowledging that this is what they really wanted to be doing all along. We must also keep in mind, however, the difficulties for women in forming and sustaining a commitment to a career, particularly in considering that the women in the current study would have been dealing with this issue on the average of 10 to 20 years ago. While they might have been afraid of only suceeding as women rather than as persons as they perceived their mothers had done, it was probably more terrifying to consider the possibility of not suceeding as women. Thus, we find women in this study describing feeling like children in their late twenties because they haven't yet married or had a family, even though they had maintained adult responsibilities in their occupations for almost a decade. These findings support previous writings by Bardwick (1971):

> For most women maternity looms as a critical life task because the internalized values of the culture have defined it as the most important task and symbol of normality and maturity, because it gives them a feeling of having achieved adult status and of having joined the community of adult women. (p.212)

Furthermore, one cannot underestimate the influence of mothers who did not believe themselves that family and career could be successfully combined; and women in the work world were not likely to be found who had resolved the problem satisfactorily, either.

Aside from postponing marriage until around age 30, two other patterns, deviant from Group #1, were observed in this study. In one case, a woman chose a career at the expense of creating a new family structure beyond her family of origin. This is clearly not a viable alternative for the majority of American women. A more viable option is to combine both family and career. While this would appear to be an increasingly viable option for women, the integration of two top priorities into a viable life structure is not without problems and clearly is not possible for every woman. In order to integrate a family and a career, a woman requires a highly supportive interpersonal environment, greater than average personal ambition, the ability to thrive or at least withstand competition, and the ability to thrive on the complexity and challenge of sequentially ordering two major priorities as becomes necessary without sacrificing either.

Suggestions for Further Research

The task of organizing unstructured interview material obtained from subjects who were selected on the basis of that organization was a challenging undertaking. While the combined use of the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis with the intensive interview elicited data which would have been impossible to obtain from more experimental techniques, the procedure was subject to both its own limitations and mine as an investigator.

In the course of Part II, an attempt was made to point out errors in procedure where they occurred in relation to specific stages of the data analysis. What follows is a more general assessment of problem areas that were encountered in the process of theory construction, and suggestions for modifying the procedure used in this study in future research of this kind.

Criteria for Further Subject Choice

With the exception of the first stage of data analysis, it would have been more useful to interview only one additional subject before proceeding with the next stage of the data analysis. In retrospect, the choice of two additional subjects at each stage was motivated by a concern whether this unconventional method would really yield valid data. Consequently, the quantity of new data, for which no previous categories of analysis had been established, was, at times, overwhelming and unnecessary. On at least two occasions, this resulted in temporary confusion and in the unnecessary interviewing of subjects #7 and #9. Possibly one-third of the sample could have been eliminated by relying on the analysis of one additional subject rather than two.

The Ethics of Questioning Subjects' Defensiveness

A recurrent issue throughout the interviewing procedure was the extent to which to question a subject further on a topic which she indicated raised anxiety for her by the fact that she contradicted herself or presented a vague and confused picture. The contract that was made with these women was not a psychotherapy contract, and there were numerous occasions when the decision was made to "back off" from a topic rather than risk upsetting a subject. Often, this decision was made at the expense of clarifying important information which might have subsequently aided the data analysis. In summary, this study underlined the importance of choosing subjects who are willing to discuss their lives with a minimum of conscious defensiveness in order to obtain the maximum interpretable data from the unstructured intensive interview.

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Investigating Subsequent Developmental Periods

The findings from this study clearly point to a need for further research on the adult life course of women. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, the age range of subjects for this study was determined with two issues in mind: an interest in the developmental tasks of women in their twenties and thirties, and a concern about the increased time required for the retrospective interviewing of older women. While it was expected that curtailing the focus of the study to women under age 40 would limit the ultimate understanding of the course of women's development, this issue became even more problematic as differences between Levinson's sample of men and this sample of women emerged during the process of theory construction. Levinson, himself, states that one cannot fully understand the meaning of one developmental period without gaining a perspective on the entire life cycle (Levinson et al., Note 1). Some of the questions raised by the findings, such as the extent to which women integrate a more stable life structure in their thirties as opposed to beginning a second adult life structure at this time which expands beyond a traditional female identity, might be clarified with data from women in their forties, fifties and beyond. Knowledge of subsequent developmental periods for women would, in addition, be useful in its own right.

Cross-Cultural and Historical Validation

Levinson has previously stressed the need for cross-cultural validation of his theory in reference to adult male development. In view of the findings of this study which indicate greater variability in women in terms of the definition and pattern of task accomplishment

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depending on the extent to which they follow the culturally-defined female pattern of development, cross-cultural validation is particularly important. Of specific interest would be the replication of this study in societies in which the definitions of and distinctions made between appropriate male and female role behavior are at variance with our own.

In view of the fact that none of the women in this study had mothers who had sustained major commitments to careers of their own outside the family of origin, and few reported relationships with female Mentors, it would be interesting to repeat this study in 20 years to see how the increasing proportion of career-committed women affects the development of the next generation of American women.

Implications for Women in Psychotherapy and in Society

In 1969, approximately 62% of the women admitted to outpatient psychiatric facilities in the United States were between the ages of 18 and 34 (Taube, 1970). An understanding of the developmental tasks, conflicts and resolutions for this period of adult life should substantially aid the psychotherapist, male or female, in working with women patients. The meaning of psychiatric complaints is enriched by a dual awareness of current developmental tasks as well as the influence of unresolved conflicts from childhood.

In my own work as a psychotherapist, I have found that when male and female patients in their early twenties report the lack of a Dream, this is indicative of significant emotional pathology. For example, a young woman of 22 with a narcissistic character disorder whom I am

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currently seeing in psychotherapy, reported that she could not imagine a future for herself as an adult. When questioned about this, she responded that she felt much too "young" to assume the responsibilities of a challenging job, and subsequently assumed positions far beneath her potential. In the course of the therapy with her, it became apparent that her inability to form a Dream was related to her fear that commitment to an adult life structure implied a total identification with her mother or father. This conflict became evident in the transference as she expressed the fear that I wanted her to "turn out" like me. Erikson (1968) has previously described the difficulty in psychoanalysing a young person in a state of acute identity confusion who fears that the analyst is attempting to impose his identity on the patient.

The concept of the Age-Thirty Transition has also been extremely useful in working in women in their late twenties who present to the therapist with complaints of increasing anxiety as they approach age 30, and still haven't found a husband. Clearly, more work needs to be done in the area of applying adult developmental theory to our work as therapists.

We need to consider further the meaning of women's greater relationality in contrast to men in our understanding of the therapy relationship which develops between women patients and their therapists. In my own work, for example, I have been struck with the extent to which the female therapist of a patient in her twenties functions as a Mentor as well as a transferential figure. A deeper understanding of the implications of young women patients working with male and female therapists could be achieved through an awareness of the function of

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significant relationships for women in their twenties and thirties.

In a recent, thoroughly documented, comparative study of women in Eastern and Western Europe, Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport have addressed the problem of getting qualified women into top-level management positions (1971). The authors conclude that there is a need to "find patterns of employment and family living which still leave top-qualified women free to follow a life cycle different from men's yet recognize that they, like men, are now life-time workers" (p.246). In our own society, resistance to this effort is found among those who deplore the already high unemployment rate among male heads of household and fear that women entering the labor market will only increase the problem.

The psychology of women has, until recently, been an area largely neglected by the social sciences. With the upsurge in research on feminine development which has occurred since the Women's Liberation Movement emerged as a significant political force in this country in the early sixties, it has become virtually impossible to speak about women without implying feminist or anti-feminist sentiments. While I believe it is well within the realm of the social sciences to facilitate social change, it would appear that society's best interests would be served if women were recognized as making vital contributions both as mothers and as members of the labor force -- without ignoring the conflicts that are implicit for them in achieving either or both of these life pursuits.

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CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY

Introduction

This study offers a conception of the formation of the early adult life structure in women based on a theory of adult development proposed by Daniel J. Levinson and associates. A review of the literature on adult development indicated a paucity of empirically-grounded theory concerning psychosocial development after adolescence in both sexes. Previous writings by personality theorists, particularly Jung and Erikson, support the premise that there may be systematic age-related changes in adult life. Levinson develops this point further by proposing that adult development involves the evolution of the individual life structure through a series of relatively universal, genotypic, age-linked adult developmental periods.

Levinson's decision to restrict his study to men was based on the premise that there would be enough significant differences between men and women that their comparison would have become the primary focus of his study. The author, however, recommends further research along the lines of his own investigation to validate his findings for women. Studying women is important, for its own sake, since, until recently, women have been largely neglected by the social sciences and are of particular interest at a time of rapidly changing sex-role norms.

The present study initially focused on the period around age 30, which Levinson posits as the culminating point of the formation and stabilization of the early adult life structure. It was expected,

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however, that an investigation of this period would be a starting point from which to investigate the entire period from age 18 through the early thirties. In examining the early adult life course of women, the study specifically addressed itself to the following research questions: Do women go through a transitional period of development around age 30? If so, what is the nature of the period, and what are the developmental tasks involved? How is the negotiation of these tasks related to the quality of earlier developmental periods? In what ways are women's solutions similar to and/or different than those of the men in Levinson's sample? What can these similarities and differences tell us about the nature of psychosocial differences between men and women in our society? Also, what applicability do Levinson's concepts such as the Dream, the Mentor, and the Special Man have in the early adult development of women?

Method

The general method selected to derive theoretical concepts pertaining to women's development was the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss. This method involves the continual generation of new theoretical categories and their properties by carefully choosing comparison groups. Data are collected simultaneously as they are being analysed in a procedure known as "theoretical sampling" which maximizes the likelihood that data relevant to the theory will emerge.

Data were collected by means of the unstructured intensive interview originally described by Maslow and also used by Levinson. Due to the fact that this was a retrospective analysis, this method was selected as being most likely to facilitate a woman in reporting detailed autobiographical material, focusing on the process of change over time. Based on a set of guidelines for interviewing prepared by Levinson, an equivalent set were designed for this study, initially planning for two interviews of 1-2 hours duration. All interviews were tape-recorded, and a detailed transcript was made following each interview. The limitations of this method lie in the fact that the data aren't comparable for all subjects, the investigator must rely on the subjects' willingness to talk about her life, and controlled unconscious material was absent from the data. Despite these limitations, a more experimental procedure was ruled out, given the impossibility of hypothesis-testing at this early stage of research in the field of adult development.

Two subjects between the ages of 31 and 36 were initially selected by means of a provisional framework which outlined eight possible combinations of familial and occupational roles. The initial age range, which was subsequently modified, was selected because, according to Levinson's theory, women would be concluding or have just concluded developmental work on the Age-Thirty Transition. Subjects were recommended by acquaintances, contacted by telephone, given an explanation of the study and guaranteed that all identifying information would be disguised or withheld in the write-up of the study. Following the interviews, written permission was obtained from all but one subject (who was not available), to quote them at my discretion. The final group of subjects included 11 women between the ages of 31-40 who were diverse with regards to familial and occupational status.

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The Process of Theory Construction

The data analysis proceeded through six stages of theory construction which involved continually testing the applicability of Levinson's premise that a period of developmental change occurs around age 30 which culminates in the integration and stabilization of the early adult life structure. Additional subjects were selected with the goal of maximizing controlled differences with previous subjects in order to determine whether common developmental changes characterized women at this age. Additional aspects of Levinson's theory, such as forming a Dream, forming a relationship with a Mentor and a Special Man, were gradually integrated into the emerging theory until a relatively coherent picture of the period from age 18 through the mid-thirties emerged. What follows is a review of the stages of theory construction:

Stage I

Stage I involved interviewing two initial subjects of different familial and occupational role combinations from the provisional framework. The analysed data supported the premise that a period of developmental change occurs around age 30 for women in which there is a change from a provisional, exploratory life structure to a more stable and integrated life structure. However, since both subjects had married around age 30, it was deemed necessary to interview two additional subjects -- one who married at an earlier stage of life, and one who was unmarried at the time of the interviews -- to see if similar developmental changes would be reported.

Stage II

Stage II led to modification of the emerging theory. The data from subjects #3 and #4 continued to confirm the premise that a change in the life structure occurs around age 30 in which there is a major shift in priorities from the life structure of the twenties. However, the change from a provisional, exploratory life structure to a more stable, integrated life structure only characterized the three subjects who were unmarried by their late twenties. In contrast, the woman who had raised a family during her twenties indicated an increasing interest, around age 30, in exploring interests beyond her familial commitments. Given the confusion and lack of direction that characterized all four subjects, it was decided to interview two additional subjects who had established relatively satisfactory, stable life structures by their mid-thirties in order to determine whether the major shift in priorities that characterized the first four subjects was indicative of chronic confusion or of a developmental transition. In addition, it was decided that all additional subjects should be at least 35 years old in order to gain a fuller perspective on the period around age 30 than had been possible with three of the subjects who were in their early thirties at the time of the interviews.

Stage III

Stage III led to elaboration of the emerging theory. The data from subjects #5 and #6 suggested implications of failing to address flaws in the twenties' life structure around age 30. Unresolved issues tended to hinder the developmental work of subsequent periods. The data could not confirm whether a major change in priorities at this age also characterized women who had established ~~a satisfactory,~~ stable life

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structure by their mid-thirties, since the interviews raised questions concerning how well subjects #5 and #6 met this criterion.

Stage IV

The overwhelming quantity of data led to the unnecessary interviewing of subject #7. Rather than interviewing additional subjects it was then decided to obtain follow-up interviews with the subjects who were under 35 at the time of the initial interviews. Data from the follow-up interviews with subjects #1 and #3 led to the identification of at least two distinct patterns of development around age 30: The first pattern involved a reassessment of the life structure of the twenties; the second involved dismantling the elements of the twenties' life structure and subsequently having extreme difficulty in forming a new life structure by the early to middle thirties. In addition, the data suggested that the two patterns of development around 30 were related to the quality of the earlier life structure formed in the twenties. Particularly interesting were how aspects of Dream formation and the formation of significant relationships in the twenties might be related to the quality of the transitional period around age 30. Since questions remained about the extent to which subjects #5 and #6 had formed satisfactory, stable life structures by their mid-thirties, two additional subjects were selected who had sustained primary commitments to marriage and motherhood throughout their twenties and thirties. If these two additional women also reported a reassessment of the life structure around age 30, this would further support the premise that a developmental transition was operative at this stage in a woman's life.

Stage V

Stage V led to a confirmation of the premise that an opportunity

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to reassess the twenties' life structure occurs around age 30, even for women who have formed a satisfactory, stable life structure by their mid-thirties. While, in retrospect, the choice of subject #9 was not dictated by the method of data collection, analysis of subject #8 confirmed the importance of some questioning of the life structure around age 30, even where dramatic changes in priorities are not made. Since, at this stage of the data analysis, dissatisfaction with the life structure around age 30 and subsequent dramatic changes in priorities tended to characterize those women who had not formed a satisfactory home and family life by that age, it was decided to interview an additional subject who had made a sustained commitment to a career throughout her twenties and thirties to determine whether career commitment would affect the degree of dissatisfaction, even in the absence of establishing a satisfactory home and family life by this age.

Stage VI

Stage VI led to confirmation of the previous findings that a major influencing factor on the quality of the transitional period around age 30 is the extent to which a woman has established a satisfactory home base by this time. Subject #10 confirmed that this was the case even for a woman who had made a major sustaining commitment to a career in her twenties. Subject #11 further confirmed the importance of integrating the elements of wifehood and motherhood into the life structure at this time in the case of a woman who demonstrated a fairly unambivalent, sustained commitment to a career. Furthermore, the data continued to confirm the interconnectedness of the transitional period around age 30 with aspects of the twenties life structure, particularly Dream formation and forming significant relationships in the twenties.

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Major Findings and Conclusions

The major findings of this study supported Levinson's premise that, for women as well as for men, the formation of the early adult life structure evolves through four age-related, adult developmental periods beginning at approximately age 18 and continuing through the mid-thirties. The periods are: the Transition Into Early Adulthood Getting Into the Adult World, the Age-Thirty Transition, and the beginning of Settling Down. While Levinson posits that the periods are interconnected, and that one cannot accomplish the developmental tasks of one period without having adequately addressed the tasks of earlier periods, it would appear that this is not entirely the case for women. Women show grater variability than men in the manner of accomplishing some developmental tasks, and this variability appears to be related to whether a woman forms a stable marriage and family life in her twenties, or remains single and/or pursues a career during this decade. Thus, the data at least raise questions about the need for elaboration and modification of certain aspects of Levinson's theory if it is to describe women's development as well as men's. To review the major findings regarding the specific developmental periods:

Transition Into Early Adulthood

The data suggest that women's development during this period is practically identical to what Levinson describes for men. The separation from the family of origin and the formation of a Dream are the critical tasks of this period. While the consequences of not forming a Dream appear to be the same for both sexes (subsequent difficulty in forming a provisional life structure in the twenties), the

Dreams that women form tend to have a strong relational component, whereas the Dreams of the men in Levinson's sample were more individualistic.

Getting Into the Adult World

Levinson describes the primary task of this period as fashioning a provisional life structure which provides a viable link between the valued self and the wider adult world. While for men, this process was characterized by forming a new home base outside of the family of origin, finding ways of living out the Dream, forming a balance between exploration and commitment, and forming a relationship with a Mentor and a Special Woman, the data from this study indicated some need for elaboration of these tasks with respect to women's development.

Where the life structure of the twenties is formed primarily around the goals of remaining single and/or forming an occupation, women like men, tend to seek a relationship with a Mentor who supports the individualistic aspects of their Dream by serving as a model for its realization. However, for women who follow a more traditional female pattern during their twenties involving the formation of a relational Dream and making an early commitment to marriage and motherhood, the period seems intrinsically less provisional than it does for the women who remain single during this period, or for men. Furthermore, the formation of a Mentor relationship seems less significant than the formation of a relationship with a Special Man who facilitates the relational aspects of the Dream by creating a world within which a "traditional" woman can live out her Dream. The mentoring function, in these cases, appears to be retained by the mother, and secondarily by other women in the family of origin.

Age-Thirty Transition

Levinson describes this period as a transitional stage between the exploratory, provisional choices of the twenties, and the demands for greater stability and integration of the life structure in the thirties. While this general conception of ATT is also supported by this study as being applicable for women, women who have not formed a satisfactory home base by their late twenties tend to feel an increased sense of urgency to stabilize their lives at this time, while women who have married and had children during their twenties tend to seek a less dependent, more egalitarian and intimate relationship with their husbands and may also begin to consider interests beyond their familial roles.

Settling Down

Levinson describes the underlying task of this period as follows: to settle for a few, key choices; to create a broader structure around them; to invest oneself as fully as possible in the various components of this structure; and to pursue long-range plans within it. While the data from this study were limited concerning this period due to the age range of the subjects, the findings did support the premise that the "settling down" component of this period is most applicable in describing women who did not marry or have children until around age 30. For the women who followed a more traditional female pattern in their twenties, the period was characterized by an interest in expansion beyond familial commitments, sometimes at the expense of stability and security.

In summary, the findings suggested that women's development parallels men's in the late teens and early twenties, may diverge considerably during the twenties, and by age 30, when both sexes have the opportunity to reassess their life structures, women must come to terms with the questions of marriage and parenting in qualitatively different ways than is true for men.

Finally, this study supported the conclusion that the formation of a satisfactory, early adult life structure is a more complex and difficult task for women in this society than it is for men. This is attributed to the fact that traditionally female goals are devalued in the culture, while, at the same time, women are severely sanctioned for not succeeding at them. Further research was indicated focusing on psychosocial development in women beyond the thirties. Questions were also raised about the need to replicate this study in societies with standards of sex-role behavior at variance with our own, and also of repeating the study at a later point in time in view of our own rapidly changing standards. What would be particularly interesting is to see the effects of increasing numbers of women who, as mothers and Mentors, successfully combine major commitments to career and family, on the next generation of American women.

An understanding of developmental issues for women in their twenties and thirties is particularly important for the psychotherapist, considering the overwhelming number of women from this age group who present for psychiatric treatment. In addition, an understanding of women's life course is critical for the development of social programs to maximize the number of qualified women into top level management positions.

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APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING

The primary task of the interview is to gain an understanding of the evolution of the woman's life structure: thus, the focus is on the process of change over time. In analyzing the pilot interviews, the following areas have been determined to be most relevant. Within each area, certain dimensions have been identified as particularly useful in understanding that particular area.

For each interview subject, I plan to cover all major areas; however, the ordering will vary from woman to woman. This process allows me to make note of which areas she chooses to discuss spontaneously and which she omits, while insuring that all areas are included. As data analysis will be going on continually, I expect that these guidelines will constantly be modified as new categories and dimensions of categories emerge and others become less central.

Opening

"Before we begin, do you have any further questions about why we're doing this, what the purpose of the study is, how you will be involved, etc? OK, you're (age) , right? Why don't you begin by telling me something about your life at this point?"

Current Life Themes

S. will give some data regarding current life themes. Get a general idea of her current life status before proceeding: where she lives; with whom; how long in New Haven area; if working, where; if not, how does she spend her days? Who are the most important people in her life at this time? If not enough of a picture develops, ask S. to describe a typical week-day and week-end. Gain a sense of how long things have been going on this way, when the last major change in her current life status was. When a clear-enough picture emerges, pick the first theme S. has mentioned and ask: "When was it you first got the idea you wanted to get married, have a child, be a teacher, live in a group?" Find out the first time S. remembers wanting to do this, when was the first time she communicated that wish to someone and what was the person's response? Who was encouraging and who was discouraging? To what extent did S. feel she was like or unlike other girls in wanting to do this? Ask: "Did you know anyone in particular who was a mother, teacher, physician, wife who you wanted to be like?"

For each area, assess: (1) the importance placed on this area in the woman's life; (2) her current level of satisfaction; (3) degree of conflict or anxiety; (4) how much things have changed; (5) when did things change (at what age); (6) what important "marker events" signified change; (7) expectation of future change; (8) extent of anticipation and/or anxiety concerning expectation of future change.

I. Sense of self in world

A. Does S. have a Dream? What is the nature of her Dream? To what extent is it vague, undefined, or narrow and rigid? Does it include enough space to be modified, focused, filled in? Who are the major character(s)? To what extent is the Dream connected to the process of living or has it died, been abandoned? To what extent does it incorporate familial and extra-familial aspects?

B. Body awareness: How aware is S. of her age? How content? To what extent does she experience herself as growing older?

How concerned is she with her health? Does she have any major health problems? Does she feel physically attractive? How important is this to her? How much time does she spend getting ready in the morning? How sexual does she feel? How often does she have intercourse and/or masturbate? Does she have sexual dreams and fantasies? How often? How important is sex to her? How energetic does she feel? How much food/sleep does she require? Any major weight gain or loss?

C. Time perspective: To what extent does she experience time as "on her side" or against her? To what extent does she feel young or old; a child or an adult? What does it mean to her "to age"? Is she continuing to "grow" or change?

D. Sense of Adulthood

E. Personal Values: Religion? Politics? Sex? How different is she from her parents in having these views and how do they feel about her feelings?

F. Social Awareness and Involvement: How aware is S. of what is going on in the world and in this country? How influenced is she by current social concerns, particularly the Women's Movement?

G. Her General Relation to her Socio-Cultural World

II. Family of procreation (where relevant)

A. Relationship with Spouse (present or projected): What is the nature of S's relationship with her husband? How much time do they spend together? What do they do? How intimate/passionate are they with each other? How do they divide labor? To what extent do they respect/like/criticize each other? What does she like about him and he about her? Dislike? What do they disagree about and how do they reconcile disagreements? To what extent do they compromise? To what extent would she feel lost without him? How important is he to her in her life? To what extent does she feel accepted/understood? To what extent is her marriage like her parents' marriage? How does she feel about that?

B. Relationship with Children (present or projected):
What is the nature of her relationship with her children? How does she feel about herself as a mother? How much time does S. spend with children? Doing what? What are the satisfactions/compromises/disappointments? How does she discipline? What are her concerns, worries, dreams, expectations? To what extent does she share child care with her husband and other friends? To what extent is she a mother like her mother? How does she feel about that?

III. Family of Origin

A. Parents:
What kind of people are S's mother/father? Extent of current involvement with parents? How often does she see/call/write to them? Who initiates? How close does she live to them? How important are they to her in her life? How lost would she feel without them? Extent of financial dependence?

How do they get along with each other? How do they spend their time? What is their involvement in work, with other people? How do they feel about her, her life? How important is this to her? How alike/different from them is she?

B. Siblings (where relevant):
Names and ages of siblings. Otherwise, similar questions as with parents.

C. Other Relatives:

Who? What is the level of her awareness of other relatives, her extent of contact with them and knowledge about their lives? Particularly, what is the extent of her knowledge of her grandparents and family background? Is she proud, ashamed? Does she experience herself as having inherited certain basic characteristics from her family?

IV. Relationships with men

A. Special Man:

Extent of sexual involvement? Is S. living with someone, have a steady boyfriend, more than one relationship, a few casual relationships, no contact?

B. Extent of Peer Friendships: Does S. have male friends? How does she get along with men? To what extent does she feel accepted, respected, intimate, dependent, controlled, cut off?

C. Extent of Mentor Relationships: Is there any man she particularly admires, would like to be like, feels influenced by? What man does she admire most? Any fictional or real-life heros?

V. Relationships with other women

Same as for men except add:

A. Feelings about homosexuality, her own and others? Any homosexual experiences?

B. Assess general identification and empathy with other women, relative like or dislike, comfort, intimacy with women vs. men?

VI. Extra-familial Involvement

A. Work:

Does S. work? What is the nature of her work setting? How much time is spent on work? To what extent does she choose to work for satisfaction vs. financial needs? What is her current level of status and leadership in her work setting? How important is her work to her? Is it a "career" or just a job? What is her level of competence? What are her aspirations for success, desire for fame, fortune, creative expression? How does she reconcile issues of work vs. family?

B. Membership in Groups and Organizations

Same as for work.

C. Hobbies, Leisure Activities, Daydreams:

What does S. Do for fun? Extent and nature of time spent in various activities?

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Developmental History

Fill in the gaps in S's developmental history not covered in the discussion of Current Life Themes. In between the first and second interviews, develop a chronology of each woman's life so that the major life events for each year are included. Concentrate on the post-adolescent years.

In Retrospect (at beginning of each successive interview after first)

Ask: "Did you have any thoughts during the week about our last interview? What did you think of it, how did it go, etc?"

Termination

What are S's final feelings about the interview experience, about me? What did it mean to her? Did she gain any new insights about herself? Would she recommend doing it to her friends?

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APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTER SENT TO POTENTIAL INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Dear____________________,

As you have expressed an initial interest in being interviewed for my doctoral dissertation, I want to take this opportunity to tell you more about my study.

I am interested in finding out about the ways in which women in our society become adults -- what happens to them after adolescence, what kinds of changes take place in their lives. The fact that some women are married and others are unmarried, some work outside the family and some don't, some have become mothers and others have not, means that the ways in which people "grow up" is not exactly the same for everybody. I want to find out something about how _you_ see _your_ life now, how you got to where you are, and where you see yourself going from here.

I have decided to interview women in their thirties. By that age, a person has had some experience of being established in the adult world, yet she is also close enough to adolescence to remember how that world got formed the way it did. In interviewing you, I will join you in an attempt to reconstruct your life story -- the various chapters, sub-plots, major and minor characters that are unique to your life and no one else's.

I am requesting two or three interviews with each person -- probably an hour and a half each and ordinarily spaced about a week apart. We can meet wherever it is most convenient and private: at your home,

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or my office, or elsewhere if you wish. I prefer to tape-record interviews so that no information will be lost. The only persons listening to the tapes will be a few colleagues helping me with the study and myself.

The study will be written up as my dissertation. Where excerpts are used from individual interviews, all identifying information such as your name, town you live in, place you work, people you might have mentioned during the interview will be disguised or withheld. Detailed notes or transcripts of the interviews will be available to you if you are interested. When the study is completed in the spring of 1976, I'll be happy to send you a summary of what I've found and to discuss it with you if you wish.

I am sorry that I am not able to pay for your time. What I can offer is a chance to review your life until now and perhaps, to get some additional perspective on it. This is an exploratory study. My purpose is to discover something rather than to prove or disprove already existing ideas. We really don't know enough about the life course to prove or disprove anything at this point. This is not the kind of research where I'm going to be trying to have you tell me something without telling you what my purpose is. I believe that people can contribute the most to a study when they know as much about it as possible -- not the least.

I'll call you in a few days to answer any further questions and to see whether you would like to participate. If you would like to phone me, please call during the day at 934-8687, or in the evening at 349-8680. I hope the project will interest you and I look forward to talking with you further.

Sincerely,

____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand that the interviews which I granted to Wendy Stewart on ____________________________ will be used as data for her doctoral dissertation on adult development in women. I am aware that the interviews were tape-recorded and have given Ms. Stewart permission to use direct quotations from the interviews at her discretion. I have been promised that, in agreeing to the interviews, that all identifying information such as my name, occupation, town of residence, and any such identifying information of persons mentioned by me during the interviews will be disguised or withheld in both the writing of the dissertation and in discussions with Ms. Stewart's faculty advisers.

____

Name

____

Date

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